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CÆSAR IS DEAD

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FOR
COLIN STILL

TO WHOM BOTH AUTHOR AND BOOK
OWE MORE THAN CAN EASILY BE STATED
IN THE BRIEF SPACE OF A DEDICATION

ITALY

IN THE FIRST CENTURY B.C.



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The date of the action is 44-43 B.C.

I AM NO KING BUT CESAR

I

THE SCAPEGOAT

BETWEEN the base of the Palatine Hill and the Circus Maximus there ran a busy street of shops, taverns, and trade-offices, opening out into the Forum Boarium. Along this street a man came hobbling and twisting. But instead of blocking his way the people stood aside, cheering and pelting him with copper coins, pebbles, rotten fruit, and old shoes. The man was dressed in heavy skins tied and buckled securely, and as he ran he grinned ahead with a set look, a glare of fear and placation. Behind him came the Salian priests of Mars, nodding their helmets, beating at their skin-drums, while the dance-leader every now and then lashed out with a spear-shaft at the man in skins. Small boys supplemented the blows, darting across the roadway, tumbling among the rhythmical feet of the priests, shouting, "Drive him out! Drive out Mamurius Veturius! Send him to the Oscans!"

The crowd cheered and pelted. Old Mars, the graybeard Year, the last Corn-sheaf, was being thrashed out, and with him went all the sins of the dead year, all the omissions and repentances, the doubts and weaknesses. The new year would be strong and insolent, certain of purpose, clean-limbed. The man in goatskins was the cursed goat of redemption. He was cursed, and he saved. He took away the sins that cursed the others.

On the side of the hill there were terraces and stairways leading up to the old Temple of Iuppiter Victor. People were crowding down from the Palatine to see what was causing the noise. The two lovers paused, pleased at being crushed together in a corner against the stone balustrade.

"What ~~is~~ it, darling?" she asked. She wondered if it

had anything to do with the war that Cæsar was launching against Parthia; but she didn't care, as long as her man didn't have to enlist.

"Only some old foolishness," he replied, squeezing her hand against him. Behind them rose the temple built of squared masses of volcanic tufa covered with peeling stucco, the March sun glistening on the figures in the terra-cotta gable. There was a fine view below. The great oblong of the Circus Maximus, the sweeping lines of tiers, and the walls beyond, on the right the market thronged with traders and pantry-slaves buying for their masters, huxters, carriers from the docks, some with trucks, others with laden donkeys or with bales on their heads. In the centre of the market stood the bronze figure of a Bull, and nearby rose the round-shaped shrine of Hercules, god of masculine good-faith. Further still loomed the crowded quarter of the Aventine Hill and the dockyards on the Tiber-banks.

"Drive out the old Mars! Drive out Mamurius Veturius!" cried the crowd. Many of them knew nothing of the rite and could not even catch the correct name with which to abuse the shambling figure. But they gathered the emotion, the religion of the gesture. Slaves from the wild hills of northern Spain jostling with Arabs from Ituræa recognised something that awoke memories of the rites of home, the promise of security that had proved false and been forever broken. But, slave or free, they were all now members of the family of Rome, and, without regret or hostility, for a moment, they were united in happily pelting out the past, the defeated curse, and in praying for Rome's greater security. The Jew remembered the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness as an atonement-offering, and closed his face more darkly than ever against the Gentiles who thus indulged in a mockery of the true law declared by Yahwe for Aaron; the Massiliot remembered the prisoner fattened for a year in time of stress or plague and then hurled from a cliff; the Athenian remembered the spring festival of Thargelia when a man and woman, condemned criminals, were put to death near the seacoast for the state's increase, neckletted with figs, beaten with fig-rods, and burnt on a pyre of wild-figwood. Someone had to die for the good of others; one man for the

multitude; and a fine custom it was as long as it wasn't oneself that was summoned.

A trader in glassware watched the noisy crowd irritably. "We don't need these old customs. Haven't we got Cæsar to look after us?"

"Don't talk too soon," said an elderly man at his side. "You'll have something different to say if some of these confiscation laws get passed. There's enough talk about them. We're only piling up money out of our sweat for rascals to steal."

"I'm piling up nothing," laughed the other, a man with sharp, shifty eyes, "except some debts. Cæsar's the man for the modern world. Old methods won't work today. Money was made to be spent."

The elderly man shook his head and turned away. Fine talk for prodigals. Wealth was possession, money in chests or jars, land, workable slaves. Everything was for show nowadays; and the cant about keeping money in circulation was only an excuse. Men pretended ledger-entries were money. Reverently he repeated some of the traditional phrases as Mamurius Veturius panted past.

Upon the hillside the lovers whispered, heard by everyone around them.

"Isn't it a lovely view?"

"It would be if all the houses were trees and there was nobody here to watch us—or if it was only night-time." Ah, night was the lover's house. He leaned over the railing and whispered tentatively, "Let's go down outside the gates—past the Aventine. There's lots of quiet among the tombs there. Only a few caretakers worried that someone will make a mess on their monuments." He watched her with tender face, fearful that she'd refuse. It was such a long walk.

"I'd love it."

They went pushing their way down the stairs, still clasping hands.

The goatman who was the rejected Year, the spent energy of the Earth, was stumbling round the corner.

"Yah, run away, old man Mars," cried the boys, viciously, hating the skin-clad figure as if he were a personal enemy.

The lady, whose shopping-litter was held up by the crush, stopped stroking the folded square of muslin-silk that she had

bought along the Vicus Tuscus, and lifted up the gold-tasselled leather-hangings. Thank Iuno it wasn't a long procession. She saw a brawny Dardanian slave staring at her and passing his tongue along his lips. She flushed. How dare the man. It was one thing to give a slave at home orders for one's amusement, another thing for a matron to be stared at in public. Trash, lower your eyes, or I'll buy you and have them poked out. Her elbow was stiff and cramped.

Pass by, Old Year. Be off to the dirty Oscans. Be off anywhere else, and leave Rome, the capital of the world, to its prosperous New Year. In a few days Cæsar sets out to conquer the East. He'll bring home the wealth of the Persians and Indians; and Rome will be safe and rich for ever. So swore the veterans, who had trooped along to Rome to give their old general a good send-off, as now they came staggering out of the taverns, wiping their lips on the back of their hands, to see the dying Year go past, the old man of the Earth, the Fox in the Corn, the Enemy.

"Hey, there goes the King of Parthia!" they bawled. "Give him a good kick for Cæsar. Tread on him. Free drinks for all and a world worth living in!"

The lady hastily closed her litter-curtain and sat nervously stroking the silk. What was going to happen to the world? There was no respect anywhere. Her nail caught in a tight knot and almost pulled out the thread. O had she spoilt the cloth? If she had, she'd give someone a bad time when she reached home.

The soldiers were throwing coins to the boys. "A gold-piece for the one that kicks him in the guts and lays him out."

The Old Year passed the corner and was gone. Grumbling, the soldiers retreated to the taverns, arms about one another's shoulders. The crowd wavered and melted away. The stall-owners were counting goods. Pickpockets slid behind pillars to examine their pilferings. The slaves at the shop-doors called once again the goods for sale within. The girls with whitelead-caked faces chattered back into the dens under the Circus. A kindly hawker threw some slop-water in the face of an old woman who had fainted. A small girl was wailing for her lost mother. The market settled down once more to business.

THIS DAY was 14th March. In the noble mansion which had once belonged to the great general Pompeius, the consul Marcus Antonius reclined, trying to think while his wife and his two brothers drank and argued beside him. "Didn't I tell you I wouldn't drink?" he said, thrusting away a cup of wine.

"Hark to him," jeered Gaius. He had something of his brother's florid handsomeness, but in a sleeker, diminutive way. There was always a sly smile about his mouth, whereas Marcus, with his broad face, large low brow, aquiline nose, thin underlip, and fair tousled hair, seemed entirely frank and easy-tempered. Lucius, the third brother, was more gaunt; his hair was darker and his face more furrowed; across his left cheek and jaw ran the scar of an ugly wound.

Getting no reply, Gaius tossed off the cup that he had been offering. "Poor Marcus can't milk the udders of the vine today. He wants goat's milk to give his voice a good bleat. For he's got to talk to the nasty Senate tomorrow and put wicked little Dolabella in his place."

Marcus looked up for a moment as if he meant to hit Gaius, then he roared with laughter and lay back holding on to his ribs. The room echoed with the hearty sound. "You're right," he said, recovering. "I'm scared I'll spew all over them. Do you remember that actor's wedding-party? I drank so much that I spewed in the tribunal next morning. Hercules! give me a drink. It makes me sweat to think of it, and yet my enemies say I didn't blush. But the lictor preserved order in the court. What a great man."

His brow wrinkled with the effort of thought and he pushed back his curly hair. He was determined to stop Dolabella from being appointed consul-elect to act as his colleague while Cæsar was away. Let Cæsar say what he liked. Dolabella was a waster; he had seduced Antonia, the cousin-wife whom Marcus had divorced to marry Fulvia.

Fulvia now leaned forward from the corner where she had been quietly sitting. "You hate that young loon Dolabella so much," she said, "that it looks to me as if you still regretted losing Antonia." She was a slight woman, with sallow face delicately modelled except for a heavy chin. Her deep-set eyes glinted savagely as she spoke, and she sat sagging

in sullen suspicion, her clasped hands pressing against her navel.

"Nonsense," replied Marcus. "There wasn't any real proof of adultery." Neither there was; but Antonia had looked so confused that evening, she must have been up to something. She was a big-eyed slut, always giggling or weeping. If she hadn't been unfaithful, she'd dreamed about it, and she showed her thoughts in the corners of her eyes. But anybody except Dolabella would have been forgiven. The man was too conceited, setting up as a mob-champion while still in the early twenties.

"You know you can't stop Dolabella from becoming consul when Cæsar wants it," said Gaius, who was determined to argue. "Who are you, my dear over-muscular brother, to rub the red ochre off the face of Iuppiter? You know Clodius abolished the power of augural obstruction years ago."

"Only with regard to legislation," insisted Marcus, who, as augur, had declared Dolabella's election invalid. "And I don't care anyway. I'm an augur, and while the state holds by religion I'll keep on finding omens to put Dolabella out of things, and when the omens give out, I'll try knocking heads together."

"You haven't answered me yet," said Fulvia.

"I have," said Marcus, looking at her guilelessly. "The only decent act Dolabella ever did was to give me a good excuse for divorcing Antonia and taking you on. But that shan't bail him out. I'll see omens till there aren't any more bad dreams left in a wine-cask."

"Gaius talks the only sense," said Lucius, moodily. "You'll have to give in sooner or later, and then you'll be laughed at. If you really want your own back, you ought to have the lad stuck some dark night when he's out serenading a wolf-sty. You're wasting your time with these political moves. Cæsar has the last word. He's merely playing with the pair of you."

"Give me some more wine," replied Marcus. "I'm thirsty, and I've got to do a lot of talking tomorrow. Come on, Fulvia. Don't be hard on us. Let's have some chorus girls along tonight, and some clowns."

Gaius groaned. "O that I should ever live to see my big brother so frightened of his wife."

"I'm not frightened," said Marcus with a bellow of laughter. "I've simply learned caution. Come here, Fulvia." She rose and walked reluctantly across. Her lean body moved gracefully, thrust forward, swaying from the hips. Marcus raised himself, caught her round the waist, and drew her down on the couch, rolling her over and laughing at her. She pulled herself away and struggled up. A new Fulvia seemed born out of the tussle. Her eyes glinted, but this time with merriment; her carefully drawn-back hair had come loose, and the tress that fell over her eyes was curling provocatively; her hands fluttered lightly as she tidied herself, humming an Egyptian love-tune.

"Bring them all along," she said. "We'll amuse ourselves tonight. No politics."

"You're a remarkable woman," said Gaius, kissing her hand. "The sort that produces triplets, or invents a new kind of pork-pasty. I'm glad to have you as a sister. But please don't ever marry me."

Lucius stood glowering at the side, but Marcus threw himself back on the couch, roaring with laughter. "She'd eat you up, Gaius," he said, "and not even show a swelling under her belly-band."

Gaius was counting on his fingers. "Send for Lucilla and Psyche and Lalage. That will be enough as far as I'm concerned."

"And send for a cask of Mamertine," said Lucius. "That will be enough for me."

"And Fulvia will be enough for me," said Marcus. "I only keep the rest of the world to give me a good laugh between times—yes, you two brigands included."

MEN passing up and down the streets. Slaves at a jog-trot repeating messages blankly over and over in their heads and muddling them out of fear of a whipping. Slaves with only a rare covetous glance to spare for the world of women and pease-pudding. Contractors discussing the profits expected from their tenders of war-supplies. Small tradesmen arguing with their creditors. "Wait till Cæsar comes back from the

Parthian War." Taverners thinking of the wine that would splash in the gutters when the veterans returned.

In the attics of the tenement the half-starved labourer pleading with his sick wife. "Don't worry. Haven't you heard that Cæsar means to divert the Tiber? There'll be lots of work then."

Land-estate agents furtively buying up land around the Vatican Hills. "If the Tiber's diverted, the Field of Mars will be built over, and the Vatican Field will be needed for public buildings. We'll be able to get our own price for it."

Engineers in their offices debating over the plans for draining the Fucine Lake. Good farming land would be reclaimed. More unemployed could be settled there. Then there was the canal to Tarracina.

Crowds besieging the unemployment bureaux, scanning the lists on the Forum pillars, scared that they'll lose their dole of corn; squabbling in the tenements where the bailiffs were making inquiries to sift out the poor with no resources from those with means. Clamouring at the emigration offices. Cæsar had planned colonies all round the Mediterranean; in the corn-growing areas, at the points where mercantile contacts were essential.

"But my cousin who's a sailor told me it's so cold in the Crimea your toes drop off, and a man has to make water down his trouser-leg."

Cæsar. Everywhere the name was heard. Cæsar. Blessings or curses, all arguments returned to Cæsar. All hopes or fears depended on what Cæsar did. The banker looking with dull eyes out of his cool offices in the Exchange and reckoning the effect of Cæsar's departure on the loan rate; the girls in the lupanar hoping for a Triumph and a city-full of riotous soldiers crammed with money; the lawyer indignant that the dictatorship has severed the courts from politics; the capitalists terrified of communist legislation and yet pleased to see new markets of exploitation opened up; the populace, angry and hopeful at the suggestion of work, talking of new shows, demanding free rents and cancelled mortgages—all were looking to Cæsar, dictator of Rome and the world.

MANY OF the trees had not yet recovered their summer coats; but there were pines and firs among them, and bushes already green. Banks of violets in a rockery stood at one side of the path that led back to the rambling neat house; and wall-flowers sprinkled the grass. There was seclusion in the garden of the banker Atticus, though it looked down on the Vicus Longus, filled with shops and shrines and small basilicas, and, at the foot of the Quirinal, the bustling district of Argiletum. Atticus was sitting in the peaceful sunlight with a napkin over his face, when his friend Cicero, the great orator and spokesman of the defeated Republic, was announced. Cicero, now in his sixty-eighth year, was still vigorous; his heavily-lined face still stared hard out on the world; his tongue never faltered; he was even more restlessly energetic than in his youth. Much of the good-nature had faded out; but his smiles, deep with kindness, showed all the more expansively from the settled gloom of his face.

As the two old friends silently greeted one another, that smile returned. Atticus noted how young Cicero suddenly seemed, and then realised with a chilling certainty how old he looked without the smile. They were both old men, loitering in the suburbs of a world that had outgrown them. He was very sorry for them both, for Cicero more than for himself, since Cicero clung so much more fervently to the world. Let go, Atticus said to himself, let go gently, and the end will be gentle. Let it come when it will.

Cicero awoke from the meditation in which they had both fallen. "Time ceases here," he said, with a quick harsh laugh. "There's one thing that doesn't change in this vaporous world, and that's friendship—our friendship, anyway."

"You seem sad today," said Atticus, quietly. "It's no use, Marcus. Give up fretting about the world. Keep to your books. Write and read. What more could you want?"

"As I passed through the Argiletum," said Cicero, "I looked into a bookshop—the shop of Fannius. I wanted to find some Greek treatises for the essays I'm writing, and I put my hand on a copy of my *Actions against Verres*. I felt it badly. That old world is gone—the world where we could say what we felt."

"It wasn't always such a good world," said a smug bass

voice. Cicero and Atticus turned with startled eyes and saw a bulky red-faced man confronting them. It was Volumnius, another banker, who had come up noiselessly over the grass. "Forgive me for surprising you," he said, "but think of the things Verres was up to when you exposed him, Cicero—looting a province and disgracing Rome before the world. That's what you said, anyway."

Cicero sighed. "Nothing matters but freedom."

"There's no such thing," said Volumnius. "There's only the question as to whether one has food or hasn't it. No one's free. The reason why I'm so happy is that I know that obvious truth." He slapped his chest. "I'm a slave. We're all slaves to fate. We're tied and shackled by every nerve and sinew we've got in our carcasses. Look at Caesar." He leaned forward confidentially. "He's perpetual dictator. He's got the world at his feet. But he isn't free."

Volumnius made a dig at Atticus with his fat forefinger. Atticus smiled wryly but did not withdraw, and Volumnius went on, "Forgive my coarse manners, but you know you can't disagree, Atticus. You're an Epicurean like myself. You know the stars in the sky and the thoughts in your head are only the same buzz of accidental atoms. More, I can tell you the way you've tangled Caesar up about this estate of yours in Epirus—Buthrotum."

Atticus looked round with faint distaste and fear, but Volumnius had more to say. "We're all friends together. I know how Caesar meant to confiscate Buthrotum, but you put financial pressure on him and he had to give up the idea. I'll confess how I learnt it. Caesar's careless. Tucca and I were asked to discount some of the bills you signed in payment of the fine. The wording interested me, and I made some inquiries at the Office of Works. A little bribery, my dear fellow. Why not? I believe in knowing what happens in this world of ours."

"Wait till I call for some wine," said Atticus, "and you must tell us more that you know about this surprising world of yours."

"No, no," said Volumnius, rising again. "I've got some business near the Colline Gate. What about dining with me this day week? Both of you?"

They agreed to dine with him, and, puffing a little, he went off across the garden, stopping to pick a stockflower, wave it at the others, and then place it behind his ear.

Cicero and Atticus sat silent. "He doesn't know everything," said Cicero, after a while. "He didn't know that Cæsar is so involved with these radical propagandists he doesn't dare let on he's dropped his plans about Buthrotum. I hear that the colony is still supposed to be going ahead. He's keeping to his trick of shipping the colonists off and then at the last moment dumping them somewhere else."

"No one's free," murmured Atticus. "How is Cæsar free when he has to play down to the popular agitators?"

"I don't like hearing how that fellow bribed the civil service," said Cicero, once more assuming the state official.

"He didn't bribe anyone," said Atticus, mildly. "That's his way of boasting. He's a friend of Marcus Antonius. He heard the story from him."

Cicero looked with admiring astonishment at his astute friend; but Atticus was drowsing with half-closed eyes. "No one's free."

"We won't debate about that," said Cicero. He opened his mouth to argue convincingly, his mind stirring with the rhetoric of political liberty, all the catchwords which he had written and spoken so endlessly, and which never palled for him. But something's snapped within. "What's the use of it? All my friends are dead, all but you. Cæsar has killed them all. They're rotting from one end of the world to the other. Ah, but I'd like to see some return made to the tyrant before I die!"

"Perhaps you will—soon."

Cicero was astounded at the fierceness that hissed in the voice. Atticus prided himself on self-control; and Cicero, though finding him at times grumpy, had never yet heard him expose hate. But hate it had been this time, a kind of triumphal bitterness of hate. He stared at Atticus questioningly, but Atticus sat back as if dismayed at an utterance so unlike his usual self. "Don't ask me what I mean," he said in a weak pleading voice. "Please don't."

Cicero forced the questions to stay mute on his lips, but he was deeply aroused. Atticus knew so much, he was close in

the counsels of so many men. What did this queer disclosure portend? Cicero's thoughts swarmed in his head, excitingly, darkly. He felt an exultation soaring through his blood. So be it. Death to the usurper—but how, when, where? What did Atticus know? "Such old friends——" he began; but Atticus, with closed eyes, waved at him in alarm.

"Don't, don't," he said in a choking voice, and Cicero perforce stopped. He knew that it wasn't distrust on the part of Atticus, whatever lay behind the agitation. It was an effort to protect him, to keep him safely out of things; and much as he disliked this attitude, he had no choice. Then, behind these thoughts, he felt a darkening of his own mind. He didn't want to know; he didn't want to speak of such things. Atticus was silent because his tongue was tied by the same unnerving sense of mystery, of incredulous fear.

But Atticus had now recovered. "I know nothing," he said, his old suave self. "I watch, and I guess, and perhaps I hope. You know what we both hope. No need to say anything more. There may be another Volumnius peeping and listening."

Cicero was disappointed. He was sure that there was something more, but he did not like to ask. Yet it disquieted, saddened him, to be left out of the confidence of Atticus. In a way it saddened him more than anything else he had ever known. The sadness clenched into a loathing rage against Cæsar, the tyrant who had insinuated himself into the affairs and minds of men so cruelly that he came even with a knife-blade of silence between dreaming friends. Nobody trusted his fellow, and Rome was a city of scheming blackguards, all vilely afraid of one another.

"No one's free," mused Atticus. "Only the man without emotion. Think of poor Cæsar. Why do you imagine he's rushing off to Parthia if it isn't because things here are getting into a worse and worse mess? It's the only way out for him. But he's been very good to us, Marcus—as good as Cæsar can be."

Cicero objected to this statement, as Atticus had known he would. He rambled into a diatribe on the glories of Republican freedom—or rather, the glories that there would be in a Republic where financiers and the official classes worked

unselfishly for the common good. But today the platitudes, consecrated as watchwords of a lifelong political strife, sounded hollow.

IN the taverns it was unsafe to say a word against Cæsar. Crowds of veterans had come up from Campania and Etruria, where they had been given plots of land. Though they had clamoured for the land, they were jealous of the new legions that would march against Parthia. Many a man, who had promised his wife to be back in a few weeks, had decided to re-enlist. All the populace were loyal to Cæsar. They objected to many of his measures; they hated the means test that he was imposing on the dole; they wanted more laws passed against the landlord-classes; they disliked his high-handed way of treating the tribunes, the traditional defenders of the plebs; they resented his curtailment of the powers claimed by the trade unions and street associations; they did not care for his policy of emigration or toilsome public-works; but they were loyal to him all the same. Somehow or other he would change things yet. He would finally smash the capitalists and bring the Age of Gold back—the time when food grew in the pantry and houses shot up like trees.

“Wait till he takes Parthia. Everything’s gold there, even the chamber pots; and there’s real gold-dust on the flowers.”

“He’ll make people sit up when he comes back. No half-measures then.”

A freedman was telling his wife, scrawling a map on the plaster-wall in defiance of landlords: “Cæsar is going to cut a great road across the Apennines to the Adriatic coast. It’ll change the whole trade outlook. I’m to do some of the surveying—part of the first report.”

“I’m so glad,” said his plump little wife, rocking the beech-wood cradle with her bare foot. “Can we rent a whole storey then? It’ll make that rat-faced Annia bite on her sore tooth.”

Around the corner the officer of a workers’ club was holding forth. “The revolution’s only begun. If Cæsar puts it off after he comes back, then he’ll have to be told where he stands.”

"And who'll tell him, in front of a hundred thousand veterans?"

"That's the whole point. How's he going to disband them? The rich will have to pay."

Next door the housekeeper was raging. "To hell with these new laws!" He'd been fined for not keeping his portion of the pavement in order. Due notice had been given by the *ædile*; a contractor had been appointed; and the householder had not paid within thirty days. As a result he'd been fined in the civil courts the sum due plus a third more; and the contractor got it all. Was that fair? "To hell with Cæsar and his new laws. Who wants the pavements mended?"

"Sssh, dear. Someone will hear you."

THROUGH the crowded city walked young Amos, the son of Ezra, a Jew. He had come down from his home on the Aventine, and was walking briskly through the lanes leading off the dockyards. He knew all the short-cuts and did not care that they were disreputable. Sailors bickering with loose-breasted women; two negroes on a doorstep tearing at a melon; gamblers squatting in the dust; a drunkard retching on the cobbles; a dog and a scabby child nosing together at a rubbish heap; a woman crying and nursing a baby; a sailor's family—wife, sister, and six children—sitting round in the open while the sailor opened his knapsack and displayed, to the envy of the neighbours, the cheap finery and carvings bought at Alexandria or Tyre; water emptied out of a top window with a warning cry; the flash of knives where two Cilicians fought over a girl, who lolled against the doorpost, her arms on her hips, insulting both of them; touts with furtive persistence describing a wonderful and voluminous woman—Amos was used to it all. He liked it on the whole. It was better than being at home in the fuller's shop. He gave the women a veiled sidelong glance, bit his lip, and walked on; but sometimes he spent a copper or two to hear the great lies of the sailors. For he loved stories. Today, however, he was careful not to dirty his brown tunic and had no wish to stop.

He emerged from the criss-crossing lanes and found himself

at the top of the Food Market. On the left stretched the entrance to the Pons Sublicius, the old wooden bridge, and, on the further side of the river, the blue Ianiculan Hills, dotted with villas. He walked over the bridge, idly watching some barges that floated through the piles cargoes with rubble for concrete. Building, always building, were these Romans, and more than ever now that Cæsar was undisputed ruler. The rubble came from further up the river; it was quarried and crushed towards the Alban Hills; its fineness and strength were the cause of the Roman success with concreting and had enabled the architects to develop their schemes of vaulting. Amos knew all about it. He was a lad with a curious mind, and considered all facts worth gathering. They would come in handy some day. But today he was not curious.

His hair was well oiled with Syrian oil filched from his mother's cupboard, and combed in waves over his ears. He had washed and scented himself with some scents filched from under the bed of the maid-servant Rachel, who was not supposed to own such things; and he wore his best shoes, dyed brown but a little lighter than the tunic. That was his only grief. The shoes should have been the same hue or slightly darker; they showed up garishly and got spotted too easily. He would have to pay for re-dyeing them. Why on earth hadn't he done so before? But as shoes couldn't be dyed at a few moments' notice, he had had to wear them: which made him sad, but not very sad, for he only remembered them occasionally. His thoughts were too busy with the visit he was making.

An old beggar passed with palsied hand twisted up against his loins, and Amos recalled the chase of Mamurius Veturius witnessed earlier in the day. Suddenly a thought came. March 14th: the day before the Ides, that was the day before the full moon; and his friend Gallus, full of out-of-the-way information, had told Amos that March was the first month of the year in the old calendar of Rome. The 14th March: that was to the Romans as the 14th Nissen to the Jews. Nissen was the first month according to the priests; and on the 14th day, between noon and sunset, the paschal lamb was to be slain and no leavened bread was to be eaten; and on the 15th was eaten the lamb that had been slain and

offered to Yahwe in token of the Deliverance of the Chosen from Egyptian bondage. That lamb had to be flawless, yeaned that year. Each family must sacrifice, and the doorposts must be smeared with blood of the sacrifice. The lamb of perfect deliverance must be eaten entire, head, bowels and all, with the unleavened bread and the wild herbs of bitterness. Amos decided that he must tell Gallus this discovery. Today began the Passover according to the Romans.

Amos reached the further bank, and looked scornfully at the shop-and-factory district; for it was there that Jews and other easterners mostly congregated, and he felt superior, even if the section of the Aventine where he lived was rather shabby. At least it was Rome proper, not "across the river." But he was not going to wander among the signs of Aramaic, Greek, and Syrian that met his eye. He continued along the well-paved river-road, enviously watching a youth dressed in a fashionably-cut short cloak who drove past in a racing-gig. Although Amos couldn't drive at all, he felt contempt for the youth. Obviously horses weren't meant to be lashed like that. The thought salved his hurt, and he stepped out light-heartedly, quite forgetting his yellowish shoes, and whistling a dockyard tune that he wouldn't dare whistle at home. Life was all very easy and fine-tasting. The chant of a fellow poling by in a skiff through the shallows pleased him. Yes, life was a song-bird that he held in a cage. To whom would he give it—ah, to whom?

Several houses were passed, standing back from the road with cypress hedges and impressive drives; and at last Amos reached the grounds that he was seeking. The Gardens of Cæsar. Amos faltered. How could he enter, even though it was a side gate and the house only one of the several villas on the estate? He made an irresolute movement forward, and then halted sweating before the postern. A tall Ethiopian stood forward at once, coming sheer through the wall it seemed to the startled Amos, and proceeded to ask the intruder's business by opening wide a huge-fanged mouth.

"I've come to see Karni that works in the kitchen," said Amos, terrified. "She said everything would be all right. It's her fault if it isn't. Didn't she speak to you?" He hated the girl and wanted to run.

But the Ethiopian clapped his back and invited him to go on; and instead of being annoyed that the man's greasy hand had disarranged his tunic, Amos was grateful. He smiled, and offered a copper coin. The Ethiopian smiled, took the coin, placed it inside his mouth, and then held out his hand for another. Amos had only some silver denars beside the copper, and he cursed himself for not bringing more change; but in his misery he took out two denars and did not dare to keep one back. He dropped them both into the vast palm, and watched them disappear into the vast mouth. Then he passed quickly on, muttering curses, "May he swallow them, and may they quarrel in his belly like three crows over a maggot. May they rattle like three stones in an old woman's shoe. May they stop his food-pipes till he bursts like a squeezed worm."

Still muttering sadly, he wandered round the house, afraid to approach close or to attempt the porticoed front. At length he noticed a side-door, and, slinking up, he looked in. He saw a girl bending down and fastening her sandal strap. Her breasts, pushed close together, showed very charmingly, as Amos noticed with a sense detached from his more urgent interests. She started and looked up angrily with flushed face.

"What do you want?"

"I want to see Karni that works in the kitchen." Amos wondered if he ought to sacrifice another of his coins. "She said it would be all right."

"Well, go and find her," said the girl crossly. "If she isn't out, she'll be in."

Amos saw that he would have to beggar himself. He took two denars and held them out. "Please help me," he said, piteously.

"I don't want your rubbishy coins," said the girl, touched. "She needs them more than I do, the poor creature. Give me a kiss and I'll find her for you. I hate her face whichever way I look at it."

Amos kissed the girl. Then he was seized with another anguishing thought. "But you won't tell her, will you?"

The girl laughed and wriggled away. "I won't promise. But you're nothing to boast about. So make your mind as easy as you can with a face like that in front of it, and I'll

tell you where to find her. Go straight on round the corner there, and knock at the door you'll see on the left. Then explain to her that Rhode gave you a stir and said you needed to be left standing a while yet—a good long while."

Amos retreated, pleased, and wiping his mouth. He had met Karni in the Food Market where she had been sent to shop, and had helped her against a meat-salesman who was cheating her. She was a Jewess, a slave; and he had obtained permission to visit her by describing her at home as a freed-woman, and expressing the hopes of picking up custom through her influence.

Finding the door, he knocked timidly. The door was opened by an enormous negress with a necklace of tiger's teeth and a red smock. She jabbered at Amos, and he was about to give up hope when he saw Karni passing along the corridor at the end of the short hall. He shoved past the negress and ran to Karni, calling her name in his fear that he would lose her after all. She stopped, laughing at his excited appearance, a slender dark-browed girl; and taking him aside in a dim room where another girl sat sewing at the window, she listened to the tale of his difficulties. Amos felt very flattered. Unobtrusively he brushed back his hair and smoothed his clothes, and kept his shoes hidden under the couch; and when the other girl went out, he took Karni in his arms. She might be a Jewess, but she was a slave of Alexandrian stock and not likely to be strict in her notions, living in such a household. He hoped correctly. Karni pushed him away once, laughed, closed her eyes, and embraced him so tightly that he knew he would never be able to uncrease his tunic before he reached home. Then she asked him laughingly if he would marry her.

It was the first time that Amos had had a love-affair, and he was flustered. All his other girls had been slaves clasped speedily in alleys of the dusk; and he did not know how serious Karni was in speaking of marriage. Being readily dazed, he forgot that she was a slave; but he remembered to explain that he was dependent on his father and couldn't marry without money. Still, this seemed a good moment to introduce the subject of custom for the fuller's establishment; but Karni pretended to weep.

"You're a scoundrel," she said, and patted his cheek. Then, as the other girl had returned, she asked importantly, "Would you like to have a look at the Queen?"

"Yes, indeed I would," said Amos, thinking that the offer might lead to a satisfactory business interview. At the moment, in his confused exhilaration, he felt capable of tackling any queen out of Asia. Karni, who held a subsidiary post of command in the kitchen and pantry, led him out along several corridors, where they met other members of the household hastening to and fro at work, and then ushered him into a small waiting-room. He kept close behind, afraid of being lost, and admiring the way that the tight flowered cotton-dress moved with her swaying hips. When possible, to make sure of not being lost, he pressed up close against her, holding her from behind with his hands over her breasts; and she lay back, letting him kiss her over her shoulder.

Amos grew more dazed. He tried to collect himself and think of business, but Karni was too softly slender, too palpably close. "Not here," she whispered. "We'll both be whipped if we're seen."

That quenched his ardour, but he allowed her to take him towards some heavy gold-threaded curtains, which she drew aside sufficiently to give him a view of what lay beyond. Holding her gingerly in his arms, Amos peeped into the room where Queen Cleopatra sat at her toilet.

At first he could not see the Queen, for the room was large, and his attention was distracted by a girl who was trimming a lamp on top of a large silver candelabra with satyr support and trying to eat a honeycake at the same time. The huge tapestry behind the girl seemed bellying in the flickering light. Lamps were needed, for the room had only a skylight at one end, and the afternoon was becoming overcast. Then Amos moved his glance along the line of green-marble pillars and saw the Queen seated on her chair with a mirror in her hand. Two girls were kneeling at her feet, washing and anointing them, and polishing the toenails. Cleopatra lay back on some red cushions with her eyelids lowered. Amos had a side-view, and his first impression was that the Queen was not at all beautiful. Karni was far more attractive,

Karni who was rubbing her head against his cheek like a well-behaved cat. The Queen was fair; her face seemed rather frail, a little pinched in the uncertain light; her eyelashes were heavy against her high cheek bones; but her nose was too long for the taste of Amos. Her mouth wasn't full enough either, and she didn't seem as broad-hipped as Karni, who, for all her slenderness, had the swaying weight at the loins that Amos preferred.

"I like you better," he whispered, emboldened, and Karni accepted his kiss. Still clasping her, Amos looked over her shoulder into the room. Cleopatra stirred, and kicked at one of the girls. Then, standing up, she slipped the loose shift from her shoulders and let it drop to her feet. She stood staring at herself in a tall silver mirror leant against a pillar. She was naked, but a warmth of proud graciousness seemed to garment her forbiddingly; and Amos, while still prudently insisting that he preferred Karni, could not deny a royalty in the naked woman. No, it would not be easy to accost her and suggest that she should send her washing and dyeing to the establishment of *Fabullus and Ezra* on the Aventine. Such schemes were easy to think out, but different when the time of action appeared. It was a fine scheme, for if he had obtained the patronage of Cleopatra, the firm would have been on a fair way to getting a contract from Cæsar for dyeing uniforms and making a fortune out of the army. Amos had seen himself kissing the hand of his royal benefactress, uttering eloquent speeches. . . . He decided to drop all such dreams and concentrate on Karni.

Karni stared at her mistress from behind the curtain. She felt somehow that she herself was the Queen of the moment, throned upon her lover's embrace in a recess of kisses. It gave one power to look at another who didn't know one was looking, particularly if one was being kissed and the other was a naked Queen.

CLEOPATRA, now in her twenty-fifth year, stood looking into the silver mirror, moving her hand up and down her long warm thighs, and thinking of the statue of herself that Cæsar had placed in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, two years ago. A lover's act. Arcesilaos had sculptured the

work, and she recalled the uncannily impersonal glances that the man with his thin beard had given her as he worked at the clay model—glances that nevertheless penetrated her senses more than a lewd stare. The fool! and yet she respected his absorption. Cæsar had been so anxious to hasten the inauguration of the temple that he had ordered the statue to be set there unfinished. Arcesilaos refused, but the statue was taken away. Cæsar was so busy, so coolly headstrong, so evasive. Why had he gone so far as to erect that statue, only to forget her the next moment? She knew how the populace and the patricians had murmured—for once of a like mind. The mongrel populace wanted Cæsar to stand alone, entirely theirs, entirely Rome's, not shared by a foreign queen; and the nobles talked glibly of keeping pure the racial stock.

Her thighs were softly strong, but so were the thighs of a myriad women. Why had Cæsar seemed on the point of succumbing, why had he dared so much the opinion of others, only to fade out of her hands? Was that evasiveness his weakness or his strength? He was hard, bitterly hard, and yet so kind, so intuitively subtle, so childlike at times. What did he want? But perhaps the clue was the Parthian War. If he succeeded—and how could Cæsar fail?—he would be absolute ruler indeed. No one could gainsay him then if he were to marry an Egyptian queen. As things stood, despite all his power he was nominally an officer of a constitution greater than himself. How could a State officer undertake a dynastic marriage? But why didn't he explain? The truth must be that he was tired of her. He could care for no woman long. He had never cared. Yet to say that he cared or didn't care seemed equally wrong of his gentleness, his ruthless will.

Meanwhile there was one thing she expected him to do. She knew that he had made a testament and deposited it in the Temple of Vesta. It was his duty to adopt the son that she had borne him. Then, if he died, the son would be a Roman, capable of claiming his father's inheritance. Cleopatra's lip curled as she thought of Calpurnia, Cæsar's wife: a Roman matron if ever there was one, a heavy, obedient woman with coarse thumbs. Calpurnia looked

the kind who would spawn puppy-litters, and yet her womb had not opened to Cæsar. The lesser nature contracted before the impact of incomprehensible power. Cleopatra had known and felt. She had conceived a son. She had taken Cæsar into the depths of her being. What was the use of calling that emotion love or hate, ambition or lust? She had known Cæsar, and she needed him; and somewhere in his being it must be the same with him.

She turned to the girls who were still kneeling at her side. "My dressing-gown." She enveloped herself in a light gown of blue silk with long sleeves, embroidered with silver flowers, and tied the girdle fast round her waist. "Send Ammonios in."

Ammonios, a stooping hook-nosed Greek, entered and bowed deeply. "Your Majesty sent for me."

"Have you been able to find out anything about that will?"

He looked at the nails of his left hand, stretching the fingers out, and then turning them in towards the palm; then he did the same to the nails of his right hand. "I have raised the loan you suggested."

"But the will?"

"So far I have learned nothing."

She stamped her foot, and her lips twitched angrily. "What use are you, you fool, you bastard of a corpse-robbing undertaker!"

Ammonios spread out his hands. "Rome is not Alexandria. Money does much, but not everything. If my services are valueless, I beseech you to find a worthier servant. My life is yours, but I cannot yet see through the stone walls of Vesta."

Cleopatra studied him with knit brows. Then she smiled. "So you at least have the money."

"It will be in the coffers by nightfall."

"You're a good servant." She stretched out her hand for him to kiss. "You may go."

Ammonios took the hand languidly, and kissed it with courtier-ease, looking up at her along her slender arm. She did not withdraw the hand, but he saw that she was thinking of other things. "Snake-spawn of incest!" he murmured, in his mind. "You gobbet that a brother threw up for the

platter of Cæsar! Too fine for such as me, you sweet sister of the cat. But I can at least cheat you."

Cleopatra disengaged her hand and touched him lightly on the wrist. "No need for play, Ammonios. It's the plunder you love, not your princess. Get back to your dragon-lair and brood over your gold-pieces. I know you cheat the others more than you cheat me."

Ammonios was frightened. Had she read his thoughts, the yellow-haired witch? She should be smeared with the fat of a she-wolf and burned alive. How the jaws of flame would crunch her young bones. But he showed nothing; he was too old a hand. "What talents I possess in the way of business," he said, "are certainly all enlisted against your Majesty's creditors." Then, bowing once more, he went out.

Cleopatra paced up and down the mosaic floor, kicking at the train of her gown each time she turned. She was proud of her long legs; they were very long for a woman of her height. But what was she to do about this will? She must know what Cæsar had written. In a few days he would leave for the war, and she would be going back to Egypt.

"Send in Sara," she said, and then seated herself, gripping the arms of the high-backed chair. She lay back, with legs loosely out-thrust, conscious of her posture. For a moment she felt drunken, tingling, sinking back into herself, warmly a woman. O if it were Cæsar and not Sara.

Sara, a squat Egyptian with shorn head and large ears, sidled in. She watched him approach without moving. When he had neared the chair, he gave a clumsy bow and stood with bent knee, staring at her with narrowed eyes.

"I've some work for you, Sara," she said, assuming a coarse tone of voice. She loved to change her manner with each man, practising even with menials.

"Yes, your Majesty," he replied, in a raucous, matter-of-fact voice, twisting his head over towards his left shoulder and raising the shoulder uneasily as if he wished to scratch it and didn't dare do so in such company.

"I want you to bribe some of the slaves of the Vestals, and find out what Cæsar wrote in his will."

"Yes, your Majesty. And what if the slaves fail? Shall there be a robbery?"

Cleopatra considered. "I'll think that over. There mustn't be a scandal. Try bribery first."

Sara scratched himself behind the ear. "I haven't noticed money buys less at Rome than elsewhere."

"You're a wise fool, Sara," said Cleopatra, amusing herself, and lolling as she spoke with an air of boredom. "Come closer and I'll tell you a tale about one of these Romans, a man named Cippius. He keeps a fine piece of flesh for wife, and when he wants something done for him, he sends a dinner-invitation to the man who can do it. Then he goes tipsily to sleep after dinner, and the wife rolls over on to the visitor's couch. So one of the slaves thought there was a chance for profit in such a sleepy establishment. He pocketed a silver cup. But Cippius opened his eyes at that, and said: 'Behave yourself, I'm not asleep to everyone.'"

Sara sniggered and scratched at his ear. "That's the kind these Romans are," Cleopatra went on, slapping herself on the thigh and sitting up, "liars, betrayed by the shine of gold in their eyes. Slavish creatures that can't bear the truth of a clean subjection even when the master's a man like Cæsar that's swept their rottenness off the earth——"

She paused. She was growing too urgent, and that wasn't the part she had meant to play with Sara. She wanted to be coarse and jesting, a tavern-trull—to dare him with her voice and see if he'd try to take advantage; and if he tried, she'd have him stripped and beaten under the navel with rods to teach him his place.

Sara looked at her insolently, as insolently as he knew to be safe. "So your Majesty means to set up as both Cippius and wife in one."

Cleopatra laughed loudly. "That's the trick, my man; and if Sara pockets something that isn't his, I'll do more than open my eyes."

Sara bowed very humbly. "Shall I set to work this evening?"

"At once." She spoke sternly, royally, again. Her blue eyes stared out past Sara, ignoring him; and he backed away, bowing deeply, as if he wished to sink his head right in between his humped shoulders.

IN THE offices along the Forum Romanum the bankers were discussing the effect of the foreign policy on the loan-rate. Like all the moneyed class, they were opposed to a dictatorship which, being based on soldiers and proletariat, was liable to pass land-bills and repudiation measures destructive of vested interests. Yet they could not but be excited about the war. It would mean endless new markets. Contact with India and China would be put on a solid basis. Unless there was something behind the rumours that Cæsar meant to marry Cleopatra and make Troy or Alexandria his capital, there was a great time in store for Rome. If money poured in, what need of revolutionary confiscations? The defenders of Cæsar among the middle-classes said that there lay his intention. The only way he could hold his radical supporters in check was by this grand imperialist measure. For it was clear that, whatever else he wanted, he did not want to interfere with the system of production that was developing, in quality and quantity of manufactures, more actively and complicatedly every year.

"But he can't be trusted."

"Look here: the Bithynian Company is still paying 30 per cent."

"Postumus is going bankrupt."

"Take care if you put central-heating in. The builder was leaving the stove exhaust-pipe right under the bedrooms."

"Yes, her hair's so long that I can let it down front and back, and tie it between her legs. Then seal the knot with my signet."

"What's Cæsar going to do about it?"

There was discontent in the civil service. Cæsar was already amplifying the service, and his plans clearly meant to give it much wider scope. But instead of providing sinecures for politicians, he was introducing his trained slaves and freedmen, mostly Greeks. A pack of Egyptians were causing trouble at the Mint. But for the minor officials there was work in abundance. More appointments were made daily. All the municipalities of the Empire, including Rome, needed re-organisation; and commissioners were busy modifying the general law in terms of each locality and producing town-charters. In the townships there was

a new burst of energy. More, Cæsar had talked of a general codification of law, and was making efforts to rehabilitate the state-religion. Peace with heaven and earth.

Manufacturers of war-supplies were overjoyed at the boom. Weapons and accoutrements, as fast as they could be turned out, were being shipped to Demetrias, the depot for the Parthian War. More public buildings were to arise at Rome. Carthage and Corinth were being re-settled; and surveyors were to report on the project of cutting a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth. Settlements around the Black Sea must safeguard another great corn area.

But everyone was not satisfied. The financiers, who had not forgotten the scares of the past, were full of murmurs: "Things seem to be going smoothly, but that's an illusion, a mere marking-time. Held-over bonds and delayed mortgages are heaping up. The loan-rate is ready to soar at any moment. The propertied classes are ready to tolerate Cæsar as things stand, but wait and see what they say when the squeeze comes. There's been no basic solution, only a series of temporary measures. And Cæsar knows it."

The nobles, detesting the dictatorship, had to admit a tolerance of many of the measures, particularly those aimed at curbing luxury and expensive funerals, at fostering the old piety of civic devotion, at encouraging the birth-rate. But they deprecated Cæsar's hustle, and hated his extensions of the franchise to provincials. He wanted to cover every problem at once. He had settled the old confusion of the calendar, introducing a year of $365\frac{1}{4}$ days. Nobody knew what he'd tackle next.

Yes, it was bad enough to put up with a dictatorship at Rome, though, after all, Cæsar was one of them, an aristocrat from one of the great governing families. But to be ruled by an absent despot, to be forced to bow to his nominated puppets while he fought thousands of miles away, perhaps for years—that was too much. Why couldn't the Parthians be left alone? The man was a sham. He needed some gaudy decoy for the mob.

Cæsar. A million voices hemmed him in at Rome, hating, loving, dependent. And beyond them millions more. In the well-fed municipalities men shrugged their shoulders: if

he kept money cheap, other antics could be condoned. But outside Italy, throughout the provinces, except in the Roman clubs, there was a reverence in the voices that spoke the name. Was the weary world to find its saviour at last? Ah, Cæsar was going to bring just government. He would destroy the pitiless tax-gatherer. He would abolish the legates and their guards that raped and looted. He would give peace at last.

Peace with heaven and earth. And the praise to Cæsar.

A CREAK. Cleopatra, dosing, looked up to see her brother standing over her. He was worse than a nuisance, fifteen years old now. Was there a dagger behind his back?

"What do you want?"

"I'm your husband, aren't I?" he asked, sulkily.

He irritated her; he was so like his elder brother who had been drowned, her first husband.

"O go away."

He caught her wrist. "Look here. You've got to make me a proper king or let me go to the war with Cæsar."

"You can't go."

"Then I'm going back to Egypt."

"You're not."

He leaned down and took her tightly in his arms. How strong he was growing. Vainly she struggled; but, satisfied with his show of strength, he dropped her on the couch, grinning.

"You didn't know I could do as I liked with you, eh? You'd better take care. But I don't want you. I only can't bear you thinking I'm fooled. I'm not. I know all about you."

"Get out." She pointed to the door, panting.

With an insulting gesture of the thumb, "That to you and Cæsar," he strode out, whistling. She heard him whistling down the corridor, then silence, then one of her girls giggling. Decidedly he was a nuisance, a bumptious pest.

It was a dreadful thing to hold the fate of Cæsar in one's palm.

So thought Servilia as she sat in her house at Rome, quietly looking at the roll in her lap. A widow now for the

second time, she was still as eagerly involved in politics, and had been inclined to throw her lot in with the Cæsarians. It had been a great relief when her son Marcus Brutus had made his peace with Cæsar after the defeat of the conservatives at Pharsalia; and though she had been afraid when he had divorced his unoffending wife and married Porcia, his cousin and daughter of the arch-conservative Cato, she had been able to smooth matters out.

Everything had been going comfortably till Cassius, her wild-eyed son-in-law, had returned a few months ago. Experienced in political embroilments, she had been able to guess quickly that something was in the air; and three weeks back, at her insistent questioning, Brutus had confessed that they were conspiring against Cæsar. After she had faced the situation, she had found less to urge against his plans. After all, Cæsar stood alone. He was dictator; and though the fact that his office had now been confirmed for life made it subversive of all Republican theory, the dictatorship itself was not alarming. If Cæsar was slain, the constitution would automatically revert to its old conditions—as in the past days when a dictator had been chosen to deal with some definite crisis. It wasn't as if a new constitution would have to be invented. Remove Cæsar, and everything would be as before. Certainly that was very simple.

Servilia was a clever woman, and, as she surveyed the world, she saw that except for the populace (whose political views she contemned as merely irrational) Cæsar had no real following, no friends, no organisation outside the scheme of the Republican State. However much people acquiesced in his rule, none of the classes that Servilia respected had anything but a devout loathing for his methods. He stood alone—and as she realised that, she felt a momentary burst of tenderness for him, a sympathetic admiration for his tremendous energy. One man, lonely amid the instruments of his will. She remembered how she had once strained beneath his kisses. How could she join in a plot to murder him?

But the emotion passed. She had learned stoicism from her son. Freedom was all in all; and in the freedom that she forecast, she saw Marcus Brutus, the sublime Liberator, as the new Cæsar—not a despot, of course, but the first man

of the State by virtue of his selfless devotion, his service of wisdom. What had to be, had to be. Cæsar had brought it all on himself; he had gone wrong ever since he left her salon in the old days; and when she thought of the haughty Egyptian queen that he had flaunted in the face of Roman society, she felt that he deserved the worst.

Cassius had stormed when he heard that Brutus had told his mother everything; but there was nothing to do save to protest and to insist no one else should know that there were women in the plot. For Porcia too had been told; but Cassius objected less to this. Porcia, as Cato's daughter, was in a different category from all other women, and he knew she could be relied on to rouse her husband if he desponded.

Now Servilia sat trying to read the book that Cicero had written in praise of Cato, the stalwart, who had stabbed himself in the belly at Utica before the army that ended the exploitation of the Empire by a degenerate nobility and a group of parasitic financiers. Not that Cato saw his end in those terms; he saw only that the last hope of re-creating a staunch incorruptible governing aristocracy was gone, and he died, determined not to add the renown of sparing Cato to the clemency of Cæsar. Now there was a temple at Rome to Cæsar's Clemency.

Servilia shuddered. Cato was dead; Cato her brother. Had the Republic really died with him—all that mattered of it, the strenuous self-dedication of the free Roman? Had that kind of freedom died, producing a new freedom, a different choice? Was the choice now between the capitalist exploiter and Cæsar the champion of strong-government?

But she drove such thoughts out of her mind. They were treason to her Marcus, the son of her body, who would restore the old virtues. Yet it was terrifying that Marcus had come from this body of hers, the body that Cæsar had possessed. From the womb of Cæsar's possession had come the seed of his destruction. She felt that the conflict was going on within her flesh, like the fangs of a cancer, a seething venom in her blood. Shuddering, she clasped her knees, crumpling the roll of Cato's praise. It was dreadful to know what she knew.

Why didn't they do it quickly? Tomorrow Caesar was to die. How could one live until tomorrow?

MARCUS BRUTUS looked very ill as he entered the room, and Servilia moved towards him solicitously. But he waved her away. His square, wooden face seemed dull and patchy, and his eyes were bloodshot; but he held himself with his usual rigorous courtesy. A little behind him came Porcia, tall, coldly beautiful, her eyes gleaming with an intense happiness under her broad, open brow. Servilia thought jealously, "Never have I seen her so full of life or him so sickly; she is drawing the strength out of him." But she controlled herself and smiled on them both, and neither of them noticed her smile.

"Gaius is not here yet?" said Brutus, referring to Cassius.

"No," said Servilia. "I had a message. Tertulla isn't well."

"What have women or family affairs to do with such a moment as this?" said Brutus, morosely, with a touch of satisfaction. "I'm surprised at him."

"Your own sister!" said Servilia, "and you know she's coming near her time."

Brutus made a confused gesture of irritation, and Servilia waited for Porcia to speak. But Porcia, complete in her world of burning thoughts, had not listened. Servilia was forced to continue. "He'll be here later." She felt stronger as she looked at her disordered son. How she pitied him for the struggle that she saw written in his face. How noble he was—and Porcia seemed to think he was doing it all for her sake!

Brutus rose and strode about the room with hands to his temples.

"Marcus," said Porcia in a tender, inexpressive voice, almost a whisper; and Servilia started. It was as if a statue had spoken—or was the suspense destroying her nerves as well as her son's?

Brutus stopped. Obedient to Porcia's glance, he crossed the room and sat beside her on the couch. She laid her hand across his brow, and Servilia was once more sharply jealous. That was wrong, she told herself; but it was Porcia's look

of exalted aloofness she disliked, not the gesture; she was glad to see Marcus relieved. Relieved he was. He lay back on some cushions that Porcia unostentatiously gathered; and the drawn suffering gradually went from his face. Porcia signed with gentle authority to Servilia not to talk, and Brutus lay back, breathing equably.

An eye for an eye. That was the law. Cæsar had enslaved. Cæsar had fought the State. Cæsar must die. It was all very simple. Why did the mind make it so difficult then, inventing scruple and doubt? It had been easy for the men of old to be great in action and renunciation; for their goal was simple. How could he, Brutus, be wrong when he was not considering his own life in the slightest? Had not Cato died without a qualm? Cato had acted greatly, for he had been simple. He had given his life greatly, for it had been a simple thing for him to give his life. Brutus had surrendered to Cæsar, not because he clung to life more than Cato, but because life and death were not simple for him.

He looked up and found Servilia watching him. That angered him, though he loved his mother. He wasn't sick. He was tired, tired of waiting. Without knowing how the subject had entered his head, he began talking about some money that he had loaned to the town of Salamis in Cyprus.

"Scaptius writes to say that he still can't make them pay. They keep on saying the rate is illegal. How can that be when I got a special dispensation for the 48 per cent from the Senate—two dispensations to cover the two points of legality? They put their hand to the bond. Forty-eight per cent was 48 per cent when they signed, exactly as it's 48 per cent now when they have to pay. There's no law greater than the law that a man must keep to his bond. It's the essence of the social pact. If I sold myself for a loan at 48 per cent and then found that the rate was heavy, I wouldn't complain. I might be enraged at myself, but I'd look at my signature and take the consequences without complaint. I hate weak people. I hate all those who fail their bond. It's the weak that destroy the earth."

Servilia did not know what to make of this speech. Marcus seemed to be defending himself, he spoke so aggressively. But who could criticise him, such a just man, a patriot

immoveable from his course? It must be his frayed nerves. "Such a short while now we have to wait," she said. But Brutus would not change the subject.

"Is it my fault that Salamis has suffered because of the obstinacy of the council? I believe that two of the councillors starved themselves to death—years ago—when Scaptius had shut them up in the Senate, to help them decide. Mere obstinacy. I hate obstinacy. It's the mark of a weak intelligence. Did they mean to pay me the 48 per cent when they signed the bond, or did they not? What's their plea-in-law? If they meant to pay it, they can't refuse afterwards. If they didn't mean it, they were common cheats. But they've kept on making a grievance about the two dead senators. Cicero, the old fool, encouraged them when he was in the province; he wanted to gain a bit of popularity at my expense. And things have been in such a disordered condition ever since, that I haven't been able to take measures. I hear that they're petitioning Cæsar."

"But you know he never goes against you, dear," said Servilia, forgetting all about the conspiracy in her distressed desire to calm him. "He'll make them pay you."

There was a terrible pause. Servilia realised what she said. Cæsar was to die on the morrow. Again the nausea of pity for the world, for Cæsar, and for herself, blotted out all else. Why should he die? He was keen to honour Brutus; and he had been so charming once—how many years ago? Ten, was it, fifteen, no, twenty. How time flew. They would strike him down, the man that she had held between her breasts; and she was abetting them. For a mad moment she felt that she must warn him; then the rebellion passed, and she saw only her son and the fate that linked them all in this dreadful act of justice.

Brutus felt his heart beat so strongly that it sounded like a gong of danger in his head. But it wasn't the man Cæsar that he meant to kill; it was the spirit of lawlessness and unrest, the crime of personal ambition. It had to be done, but why was he chosen to strike? Why was he of Iunian line, fated to be the destroyer of tyrants? How hard he had fought against the arguments of Cassius, and yet he had known from the first moment, instantly, after hearing

that cool voice declare for death, that the deed must be done. It was the only hope for the world—his world. He hated it, but it was fate: not the vulgar fate locked up in infrangible mathematics of the stars, but the fate of human will and corruption, of wrong and right, fiery in the blood. Cæsar must die.

He looked up, and for an unaccountable reason found himself thinking resentfully that his mother should never have married a second time. She should have remained faithful to the memory of her first husband, the father of Marcus. Life would have been clearer somehow, if she had. Turning, he looked at Porcia, and all his doubts fled. Always in his wife he saw only the daughter of Cato; her proud calm face hung like a carved moon on the night of his despair. How dare people say he had married her for her money—the estate that Cato had gained by re-marrying the woman whom he had divorced for the benefit of the rich old Hortensius.

PORCIA gazed at the pair before her and saw nothing of their ailing hearts. She was ecstasied by the part she was playing. She knew only that she was the blood of Cato, and had not realised at all what was happening.

The conspiracy to her was a dramatic echo of the lives of the dead heroes that she had been taught to revere. It had not merely lighted the present with a torch from the heroic past; it had dazzled out the present altogether, and she saw only the brighter lineaments, the glorious shapes, of life transfigured into deity. She had stabbed herself in the thigh to show Brutus how easy fortitude was, and she had felt no pain. She had called him into the room and lifted the sheet to show him her naked body with the blood spirting from her thigh as she drew out the knife. He had almost swooned, and she had been so sorry for him. Things like that did not hurt. She had fallen into a fever, and her head was still burning; but that she did not know. She knew only the transfiguration. She heard the voices and watched the people moving, and she gazed adoringly on Brutus who was the cause of the sights and the sounds. It was his hand that held the knife.

As BRUTUS looked at her, he felt strength flowing back. His chest expended and he took a deep breath. He sat up straight and marvelled at the peace that he felt in his hands. He would strike hard and clean. He would cut the gangrene from the flesh of the world. Cæsar's end would be a warning for all time. The man had great talents; all the more reason why he should be punished for prostituting them. Brutus placed his hand on Porcia's lap and felt beneath the stola the bandages round her thigh. "Ah, noble one." She flushed, and put her hand over his.

Steps were heard, and Cassius entered unannounced. "Tertulla's in the next room," he said, unable to curb altogether his annoyance at seeing Brutus with his two female confidantes. It still puzzled him whether Brutus had heard of Servilia's old affair with Cæsar; everyone had surmised it; and yet how could Brutus have confessed the conspiracy if he guessed? That was the point that had astounded Cassius, and still disturbed him. He scrutinised the faces as he went on, addressing Servilia, "I'd be most obliged if you and Porcia would join Tertulla. She's not at all well, but I brought her along in the litter. It made everything look so much more like a family-gathering. And, don't forget, Decimus will be here later. That had to be risked, but he mustn't find out that you both know about things."

"Of course we'll go and comfort poor Tertulla," said Servilia, rising and taking Porcia's hand. Porcia did not want to go, but had no choice.

"Don't forget to say nothing about it all to her," said Cassius. "She has no idea—naturally," he added, unable to omit the touch of malice.

"Of course. When she's so sick you wouldn't worry her," replied Servilia, challengingly, determined to shield Brutus and misunderstand what Cassius had said.

But Cassius had no wish to indulge in a verbal exchange with his mother-in-law. He inclined his lean, dark, eager face, and stood aside, waiting till the women were outside. Then his manner changed. He dropped his air of disdainful tension, tossed his dark hair, and with brightened eyes walked up and down the room almost gaily.

"Nothing can go wrong now," he said in his quick, decisive voice, which habitually carried a note of mockery for a slower-witted world. "We've passed the danger-point."

"I'll say that," answered Brutus, "when the man lies dead. Come away from that door. There might be a slave listening."

"I've been the cautious one till now." Cassius came up and rested on the couch beside Brutus. "But I feel that we can't fail now. I feel that I could go out and shout in the streets and yet be safe."

"Well, don't put your feelings to the test," snapped Brutus.

Cassius regarded his friend and wondered what had first driven him to broach the project. He loved Brutus and yet despised him. Had his act been a wish to surprise Brutus out of that bookish calm of his, to teach him that the world wasn't a library, to put to the test those aphorisms that he uttered with such impeccable firmness? Something in Brutus had stirred a dare-devil contempt in Cassius. Cassius could not resist forcing him through the trial, and yet he loved him all the while; and after he had brought out the project in jesting bitterness, he found that he had uttered his own deepest emotion and wish. Hate. A generous hate. How dare Cæsar stand on the top of things and portion life out like a schoolmaster pointing to the world mapped on a wall? Cassius recalled his own hard career as a soldier, fighting back the Parthians, keeping clear the Roman frontiers of the east, without proper equipment or soldiers, without praise or recognition. Yet it had been under the Republic that that had happened, and he had turned his sense of frustration upon Cæsar. Why not? The man represented supremely the swollen careerism that had destroyed all the good elements of the Republic. Prick him, and there was a chance to get back to the rule of law. Cassius wanted only to give the State his best; and he had given it during those hard years in Syria. Brutus had never known what real fighting was.

"I saw Trebonius today for a few moments."

Brutus rouse himself. "What did he have to say?"

"Nothing fresh. He knows his part. He'll see that Marcus

Antonius doesn't cause trouble. I impressed on him how necessary it was to grab Antonius so that we can use him as president to declare the return of normal government."

"I don't like Antonius."

"But you know we need him. He'll be the sole consul. If he were killed too, there'd be chaos. Isn't the whole point of our action that we want things to revert at once to the normal. Since the dictatorship's an abnormal office, at Cæsar's death it will cancel itself and all its anomalies out? Things will be as if Cæsar had never existed."

"You know I know all that. Why keep on telling me? You don't trust Antonius any more than I do, even if he did show the right spirit against the radicals two years ago. The man thinks only of himself."

"Well, are we to reconsider our plans at the last moment? You're for killing Antonius, I take it. There's a wisdom in that, I'm the last to deny."

"Of course we can't kill him. You know we need him as consul. But he's a coward for all his bull-neck. He'll go with the tide. Besides, Decimus wants him saved—because they fought together in Gaul."

Brutus spoke cynically, unlike his usual tone; and repented. Why shouldn't Decimus want to save a comrade? But friendship must count for nothing in such a matter.

Cassius looked up sharply. "Decimus is jealous of Antonius, and doesn't want us to know it. He'd be pleased if we overruled him."

Brutus shook his head angrily. "What's that to us? Good God, haven't we enough to think about, without tearing the motives of one another to tatters?"

"I didn't start the subject," replied Cassius, feeling unjustly treated.

Brutus was about to retort, but he drew back, pressing his eyelids down over his eyes. "I've had no sleep for nights now. I don't think I'll ever sleep again." He was haunted by the image of Porcia's wound. The fountains of the night ran with blood. Blood drizzled from the nipples of the stars.

But Cassius had something he wanted to say. "Trebonius was telling me again how he decided Cæsar must die months

before we thought it all out." This knowledge pleased Cassius deeply. It shifted the responsibility; it proved that the movement had grown, not out of any wilful scheme, but out of the gathering need of men's spirits. Cæsar had to die. The impulsion had come from justice, not Cassius. Trebonius was a man of considered judgments, a lawyer and a soldier. Whose decision could be more damning against Cæsar?

"But look here," said Brutus, peevishly, returning to a theme that he and Cassius had argued out to exhaustion. "How can you as an Epicurean be concerned whether Cæsar tyrannises or not? You can't admit justice or freedom as a motive-force. It's different for me. I admit a moral power in the universe. You don't."

"You're wrong," said Cassius, pleased to have any subject of debate and repeating phrases without fully thinking what they meant. He seemed half-detached from his body: a condition of mingled anxiety and elation. "I follow justice and the good because I find pleasure in doing so. They're part of an harmonious life—my shape of pleasure. All else is deception."

"You can't argue that," said Brutus, with a deadened, argumentative voice. "According to your philosophy everything's equally deceptive or equally real. There's only individual choice." He jeered. "You're a virtuous hypocrite, Gaius Cassius."

"Of course there's only individual choice. That's the whole meaning of it——"

But Brutus wasn't listening. He was afflicted with horror. He had seen Cæsar falling, stricken, stabbed in the thigh. He felt himself soaked in blood, damply embracing Porcia. O doomed child of the earth, where is your refuge, now that the womb has become the cavernous wound of time? Yet Cassius ranted and gesticulated confidently on. Sweat trickled from the forehead of Brutus.

"Stop, stop," he implored in a thin, fainting voice. "I tell you my digestion's out of order."

Cassius thought he was joking, and went to reply sarcastically; but he saw a large tear start out from under each of the eyelids of Brutus and roll down his cheeks.

WHEN Decimus Brutus arrived, both men were emptied of emotion. Marcus Brutus had reached the mask of impassive, sombre dignity that he never relaxed before the world, and Cassius showed only the taut, acrid eagerness of his usual manner. Decimus Brutus (no relation of Marcus) had a strong soldierly bearing, and his heavy-jowled, capable face displayed no sign of inner conflict. He had been dining with Cæsar at the house of Lepidus, the master-of-horse, or second-in-rank to the dictator. Lepidus, a rough, amiable aristocrat who was married to Iunia, the elder daughter of Servilia, knew nothing of the conspiracy.

"Did he show any suspicions?" asked Cassius. Brutus sat stonily. Before others he could not reveal the slightest fear or even interest in such matters.

"Not a bit. But he wasn't in one of his literary moods. In fact he spent most of the time signing letters and giving instructions aside to his damned freedmen. Balbus was there, of course, whispering away—but only about accounts and business."

Decimus paused and licked his dry lips. There was clearly something else he wanted to say.

"What is it?" asked Cassius.

"He said one strange thing." Decimus gave a short brutal laugh, not the kind of laugh he had meant to give. "Someone started talking about the best kind of deaths. Lepidus said that though not much of a musician he'd prefer an Orphic death—being pulled to pieces by women. Trebonius said that death in the midst of a dreamless sleep was best."

Decimus paused again.

"Well, what of it?" said Cassius. "There's only death at the end of it all, however death comes."

It seemed that one had never realised it before. Death, the crumbling void, was all around. That was the sound that terrified in all silence. That was the voice of the stranger, the noiseless presence at one's back on a lonely road. What was the merciful dullness that enabled one to forget it? Brutus passed his hand across his brow, and was again his impassive self. All the less reason for taking to heart the death of a single man. What did death matter? Thousands died with every breath one took. A man died; and the

earth claimed his body, and the air claimed his breath, and into light went his starry energy; and there was an end of questions. Yet it was horrible.

Decimus gulped and spoke quickly. "Cæsar looked up and said in a quiet voice: 'Any death is good as long as it's sudden.'"

"He shall have his wish," said Cassius, with a soft ferocity. Brutus felt the sense of fate deepening, star beyond star, voice within voice. There was a peace in that.

RESPECTABLE citizens had gone to bed or were lying in family groups, conversing, yawning, asking if Antonius as consul would be able to control the rashly radical Dolabella. Antonius had stood up for order two years ago, but had it been partly because Dolabella seduced his wife? He was a libertine himself, but by no means unsober when he came up against administrative issues. Still, even the men who disapproved of Cæsar were somewhat afraid of what would happen when his strong hand was removed. Parthia was so far away.

The taverns and brothels were warm with light and chatter, though Cæsar's police regulations were becoming stricter. But a cup of wine and a handful of woman-flesh were unforbidden. It was gambling that the authorities were trying to suppress; but they sought to catch, as well as the poor gambler, the rich indulger in rare meats. The problem of a fire-brigade was also taking up attention.

Amos walked home through the dark streets. He knew his way without the flares of light from doorways when the curtains lifted. Someone on a roof knocked a flowerpot down that fell at his feet. A sailor lurched up and tried to sell him a green parrot who could say a Hail-Cæsar in Latin and obscenities in ten other languages. Amos shook the man off. Karni was undoubtedly an astonishing woman. He could still feel her nearness, sinuously consoling. What if the establishment of *Fabullus* and *Ezra* would never gain the laundry patronage of Cæsar. Cæsar was the Mighty. Strength be with him, and let him dye his uniforms where he liked. But Karni belonged to Amos, not to Cæsar.

Cæsar. That name was the pulse-beat of the city, for

friend and foe alike. Only seventy-five men lived outside the circle of its domination. Seventy-five men, many of whom had partaken of Cæsar's most open-handed bounty, men who were his high officials and had once been his generals. They were sworn to kill him on the morrow. Though many of them envied him, though many of them had grudges and complaints, none of them hated him. They were drawn together by a need outside themselves, an hypnotic word, a thought which had never been realised yet. Freedom.

They all knew of the cruelties and dissatisfaction, the inefficiencies and corruptions and money-grubbing of the Empire governed by the Republic; but such memories meant nothing. They saw only the other side of the past: the combination of free men for a purpose of necessary service and government. No one should be the master of his fellows except for short periods in terms of a strictly limited constitution. Since magistrates were required among weak and criminal men, the worthiest should take their turn at ordering and educating society, drawing it towards the rule of self-administered justice, the perfectly harmonised family of man. But such offices should be an acceptable burden, not a prize for the ambitious.

What did it mean to answer that such a condition never had existed, never would exist? A word was greater than such doubts. Freedom.

The net had closed round seventy-five men, and they could not escape. Once the confidence had been offered, they were bound. How could one of them betray, even if he feared and hated the act of murder? He would be an outcast for ever, branded with unutterable shame among his fellows. There was nothing for it but to wait, and, when the hour came, to strike.

Quietly, with the aristocratic composure ingrained upon their lives, the seventy-five men had gone about their daily business, visiting one another, attending to their work in the Courts or the Army, exchanging the trite comments that hid their hearts. But in their hearts was a word of flame, a gnawing pang and exultation. What use to tell them that they were roused only because their class-interests were threatened, because behind Cæsar stirred the awakening demands of

the poor and the oppressed, because they were the tools of the moneyed interests that dreaded a clearer sense of human rights? Many of them were risking or discarding high rank under Cæsar for the doubtful chances of the restored Republic. One and all they heard only a commanding word. Freedom.

No one had any intention yet of going to sleep at Dolabella's house. There were eight guests, one of whom was Cytheris, the actress. She had been freedwoman and mistress of the banker Volumnius, then mistress of Antonius, who had carried her about while he governed Italy during the early years of the Civil War. But Fulvia had made him promise not to see her again; and for the moment Cytheris was unattached. She lay at the table like the men, though respectable women always sat in chairs. Much wine had been poured out.

Dolabella, a dark-eyed, small-bodied, elegant young noble who had joined the extreme radicals, was boasting how he would discomfiture Antonius on the morrow. He was a favourite of Cæsar, and had no fear of failure. "Do you think Cæsar's got any sympathy for the financiers? All he wants is the glory of conquering the east. Can't you see how that will finalise everything for him? He's unconquerable, but so far he's only beaten a pack of Gauls and won in a Civil War. When he's broken Parthia and fixed the boundaries of the Empire on the Danube and the Persian Gulf, things will be different. He'll be a real national leader."

They drank and argued. The room had been decorated in the latest style. The love of the Romans for the open air had shown itself in an effort to make the walls express space; and the realistic attitude had dictated the method, a fresco of landscapes painfully exact in perspective. But there was also a decorative richness in the great swags of fruit and foliage that hung between the mock-pillars; and the colour was subdued and harmonious. A continuous frieze ran round the room, revealing meadows, islands, lakes, hills and vineyards, which looked fantastically, garishly real to the half-closed eyes of the drinkers in the lamp-lit room.

Bored with politics, they let Nicias, a scholar whom Dolabella patronised, draw them into a discussion on the

meaning of various words in Homer. All took a part, for well-educated Romans knew the poems thoroughly.

"*Sparta* isn't the Spanish-broom used for plaiting ship-ropes," said Nicias. "It's a kind of hemp with the same name grown in Thebes."

"The Liburnians used to tie their ships with thongs," said one of the guests, stirring his wine with a slip of parsley, and nodding his head.

Gallus, a young man from Southern Gaul, was listening intently; for he prided himself as a poet, and, being yet unknown, he hoped that these discussions would give him a chance to make some magnificently illuminating remark—a comment at once simple and profound that would declare itself to even the dullest as inspired. But the others were more learned than he was at these philological inquiries; he had nothing to say, and a deep malaise overcame him. Everyone fitted into the world but himself, and Cytheris did not spare him a glance.

Dolabella also wearied. He clapped his hands and called for a buffoon, Lalon, who ran in and turned somersaults. "He cost me a pretty sum," said Dolabella, complacently. "He's got artificially deformed genitals. Strip and dance for us, you frog-begotten creature of God."

The buffoon, chanting in a strange tongue, leaped and somersaulted while the guests applauded, splashing him with wine. Dolabella shouted for music. Flute-players and cymbalists appeared; and dancing-girls, shimmering in gold and unguents, swayed at the room's farther end, against the fresco of the orange-garden, while the buffoon spun round, uttering short sharp screams.

"Dull stuff!" said Dolabella. Taking up a silver jar of nuts, he pelted the performers out of the room. Then he turned to his guest. "Why doesn't Cytheris distract us?"

She had been lying quietly, toying with a salad, and saying nothing. Gallus had not ceased watching her for a moment. Never before had he felt so tormenting the allurements of distance that lay between him and a beautiful woman. Nicias had introduced him, and he did not feel at home, pleased and excited as he was to meet such people. Some day he'd win a name, and then the exclusive folk would

hunt for him. But not yet. Now there was the disturbing essence of Cytheris, the sleek shape of warmth that he could feel even with his eyes shut. By reaching out his hand he could touch her hip. She was half-turned away and hadn't looked at him once. A tall woman, with a merry, full-fleshed face, long blue eyes, a little chin, and curly brown hair. The curls hung down over her forehead, and over them a thicker mass of hair was raised into a filleted band across the head. Her green gown was figured with crocuses. She had slipped off her sandals, and her bare left foot was stretched out towards Gallus. He looked at its grained surface. Even a delicate well-washed foot was coarse underneath. We are all beasts of burden, he thought; but he would have loved to kiss her sole, nevertheless, to place his fingers round that shapely ankle and raise the sole to his mouth—even when it was sweaty with walking in the open. Bah, thought Gallus, she would kick me in the face, and rightly too; a kiss should aim higher.

"I have retired from the stage," she said, with a tranquil laugh. "I'm rich enough to rest now."

There was something pathetic in the words, in their very simplicity and lack of self-pity—so though Gallus. But the others shouted with laughter and crowded round. Gallus watched the toes on the near foot wriggling—was it dismay at the others or invitation to him? But before he could make up his mind, the drinkers had dragged her from the couch and made her stand on a blue woollen rug for a platform.

"What shall it be?" she asked, placing her hands behind her back and swaying girlishly on her left foot.

"The Sick Whore's Lament," hiccupped one of the guests, spilling his wine.

"Sing us The Girl from Capua."

"No," said Dolabella, "act us that soliloquy from the mime of Laberius—I forget its name, but here's the chief tune." He whistled a few notes.

Cytheris smiled; then, pulling out her dress over her girdle, she disordered her hair and said, "Now, lads, you behold in me a full-length woman disguised as herself with the aid of wine and a sense of injury."

Gallus watched in sorrow and shame. She really shouldn't

do such things; but she was a consummate actress, he had to admit. She seemed to puff out, grow blousy and drunkenly fat before his eyes. She tottered slightly and began the soliloquy, complaining how she was cheated. The others bellowed their applause, but Gallus felt sadder than ever. Couldn't the fools see how painfully long-suffering she made it? All the trials and troubles that she had encountered and overcome in her own career spoke grossly, wretchedly, compassionately in this caricature. Could no one see it but himself?

She was moving round before the couches, holding out her hand, begging, soliciting, cracking smutty jokes, clapping a shoulder in confidential good-fellowship, then whining and wheezing. Gallus tried to laugh, but failed. When she came back to the couch he would turn to her and make her notice him, at least for half a dozen words. He would say, "I thought it marvellous, the saddest thing I ever saw." Surely that would startle her, make her want to know more about him, force her to see how different he was.

"Six of them, sir, and the dirty dogs stole the savings I'd hidden in an old shoe; but I'm not complaining—that's all in a night at home.
But what I do call hard on a working woman was them refusing to pay me what they'd agreed.
It's against the law. They ought to respect the law. . . ."

She halted for a moment in front of Gallus, and he stared back without a smile, striving to show in his deep eyes how much she stirred him. She seemed troubled, and passed on.

"Splendid!" cried Dolabella. "As Plato would say, the perfected and therefore divine image of whoredom."

Gallus realised that the recitation had ended. He braced himself for the effort when he would make his comment to the returning Cytheris. All his life, he felt, depended on his ability to attract her interest.

But he never made the comment. Dolabella, springing from his couch, caught up Cytheris as she stood with hands hanging loosely open at her sides, bowing gently to the hand-claps. He swung her up in his arms and walked out of the room with her, kissing her on the throat. A courageous gesture for such a small man. Gallus saw her head lying

back, her eyes closed. Was it the abandonment of despair or happiness? For a moment he was sure she had fainted, and he wanted to call out to Dolabella "Stop!" But what did it matter anyway? She would never be his. Gloom encompassed him, and he hated the world, hated his guffawing companions.

A slave came with the message that the guests were to call for any wine or amusement, but Dolabella wished to be excused. Gallus rose to go, but felt leashed to the couch. Better stay and drink himself senseless on the wine of the cursed young noble who, ruined debtor as he was, yet took all he wanted from the unresisting earth. Ah, when Gallus was famous, how he would insult the leching pair—filthy beasts both of them, parasites, blind of heart and rutting without comprehension. The world was the poet's, though no one knew it, least of all the poet.

"Wine, boy!" he called, and began hotly arguing with his friend Nicias, who had introduced the pet-subject: Was the hen or the egg first-created? A debate on Evolution sprang up. Did nature function by working from simple to complex, or by maintaining fixed species? Nicias led on the upholders of either proposition and then refuted both, declaring that they were mixing terms, using egg in the sense of seminal essence.

"The egg's only, so to speak, the digested semen. It doesn't exist in its own right any more than a woman could evacuate without eating."

"You're wrong," said Gallus, determined to argue. "Push the terms back further still and your argument's flat."

"But we must agree on the given terms."

"Why should they be given? Why not others?" Gallus wanted to argue on and on, round the vicious circle; he was pleased to see that he was infuriating Nicias, whom it was most impolitic to alienate. He didn't care.

But it was the truth. Give anyone but Cytheris. Save her from the gap in all calculations, the womb of nothingness. She was clutching at Dolabella, her body cloven by the primal error, losing herself in the chaos of heat, all to no purpose. Only to shut out Gallus, to leave him crying on

the flaw in all syllogisms, all relationship. But Dolabella—why did Cæsar favour such rats. Down with Cæsar then.

Come to me, Cytheris, and everything will be different.

BETWEEN waking and sleeping Cleopatra came to her decisions.

She had wanted to have her brother whipped, but a whipping would cause too much of a scandal. There was scandal enough already; and yet no one could have lived more quietly than she had lived at Rome. Never once had she unleashed her impulse to cut a fine figure, to interfere in politics, to gather round her the intellectuals. But this brother of hers was too incongruous in the sarcastic society of Rome. Later she would have to think more about him; meanwhile he must go off somewhere; the bay of Neapolis. If she'd left him in Egypt, someone would have used him to start a rebellion. But he'd be safe at the Campanian seaside; Ammonios would see to the necessary spies, and a girl, a beautiful and brainless girl, to keep him occupied, and a mettlesome horse that might break his neck—he liked riding. Ammonios would see to it all. The boy must set off early tomorrow; she couldn't bear him in the house any longer.

Alone in her bed she lay, and between waking and sleeping thought of Cæsar. There had been little enjoyment in his arms, save during those days on the Nile; and yet she longed for him, no one else. Slowly the lotus of sleep closed petals about her, closed on her limbs the flower-cosmetics of her fine breeding, her glistening will. Is it the man or the power in the man? But how separate them?

The lotus-body opened petals, restlessly dreaming the coming of Cæsar.

CÆSAR was sleeping. Once his body twitched and he muttered incoherent words of sleep. Calpurnia raised herself on her elbows and watching him irresolutely. How frail he looked, despite his unfailing strength, this Perpetual Dictator endowed with tribunician inviolability, Prefect of Morals, Consul, Chief Priest, and Imperator. He was her husband, and she felt stranger with him every day. She knew nothing about him, except that he was master of the

world, and it frightened her to be the wife of such a man. They had been married some fourteen years, and he had spent only a few months of that time with her. How was it fair to blame her then that she had borne him no son?

She felt resentful, but did not dare do more than savour a few dim thoughts of anger. If he were to awake and stare at her with those calm, pitiless, blue-grey eyes, she knew that he would read her mind. Then he would surely divorce her at last. She expected to be divorced daily, and yet he had never made the slightest complaint. And he was so kind sometimes, so thoughtful. He shouldn't have married her. Was it her fault that fourteen years ago politics had advised an alliance with the Calpurnians? She would have preferred someone with a large villa in the country, a moderate income, and no ambitions. She was sure that then she would have borne child after child. She needed to feel the summer throbbing in the earth, swelling sweetly in berry and fruit, before her body could respond. But she didn't care if she were divorced after all—as long as he didn't marry Cleopatra, that Greek harlot from Egypt, whom he had made her receive. That had been his only cruelty.

Calpurnia rose quietly, moving with stealth, and pausing to make sure that she wasn't disturbing Cæsar. But he was sleeping so deeply. She sighed. She would have liked to soothe him and sing him a lullaby on her breast, but she feared. He had taken her tonight, and she was oppressed. She felt that he was expecting her to become with child, blaming her. How then could she find pleasure in her body, how could she relax even now that he slept, his large head laid loosely on the pillow?

She went to the window and looked out on the street below. No one was passing. Rome was silent. But she felt as if there was a pulse in the bed that she had left, the life of Cæsar, and it shook the night like a wind, like the snake of wind that wrestles with banners. Her body too was shaken by the alien enveloping pulse. She gripped the window-sill. Was it a child conceived at last, the first leap in her blood? She brushed away the hopeless thought and stood there, bare-footed, waiting.

Cæsar had looked so weary as he slept. Indeed he was

weary. People had repeated to her that he once said he had lived long enough; and he was not a man to say things idly. What had he meant? He had spoken to her more intimately tonight than ever before, embracing her, softened briefly out of his tension. He had said: "It all lies in the will of a man, in my will, and yet it can't be hurried. It has to grow. It has to come out of the earth like a tree, biding its seasons of growth and renewal. Ah, Calpurnia, the life of a people must grow into new shapes. It can't be hurried, and yet when that new life is there, nothing can stop it. Those that hate me and those that look to me, alike forget the truth. I forget it. It can't be hurried. And yet it all comes out of the will of a man, and I am that man, and yet I cannot see the end. If only one could die and return to see the roots of one's work finding their grip in the soil! But that is not granted. One must die and not know. Death is the end, and yet life goes on, and that is the bitterness."

Calpurnia felt her body contracting with fear and doubt. She couldn't understand him. His words hurt her mind. How could her body open to a man who spoke such words in her bed? Yet the harlot Cleopatra had borne him a son, Cæsarion. Calpurnia's damp body chilled with the breath of the night. Cleopatra was a harlot. It was someone else's child. Cleopatra had lied and won Cæsar's smile; and Calpurnia had paid the price of fidelity in barrenness that made her frightened and ashamed.

She looked out of the window at the few stars frosted on the sky, and again the sharp breath of the night invaded the room, a sigh from the city swallowed in the dark cavern of slumber. Millions of lives uttered their prayer to form that sigh. The world was sighing towards Cæsar, and only the woman who shared his bed did not feel part of him. All these others looked to him for guidance, for the meaning that alone gave life value; they were part of him, partaking of the flesh of his bounty in their feasts of thanksgiving, sustained by his existence daily renewed; but Calpurnia, who had lain under his embrace, felt only a dark solitude, an earth turned into barren stone, the vast necropolis of sleep.

II

THE VICTIM

THE dawn-sky was a frail pearl-grey wash, and the populace were pleased; for it was a festal day, the day of Anna Perenna. Out into the Field of Mars tramped the families and the lovers, carrying food in baskets, knapsacks, or kerchiefs; and the huxters went with them, the shumbler with a barrow or tray on straps, the lordlier with an ass and slave or two to set up a stall where cakes and wine and bran-pies might be sold. This was the feast of the returning year, eternally the same, yet patterning new destinies for men.

The meeting of the Senate had also been fixed outside the walls, in the same area as that to which the holidaying folk betook themselves. Brutus set out a little before dawn. He was glad to get into action at once, and as chief prætor had arranged to hear some minor cases. The Senate was to meet in the Curia on the southern side of the large Portico and Theatre of Pompeius; and the attendants had the tribunal erected ready for him as he entered with his lictors. The litigants sat waiting on their bench. Important cases were kept for the Comitium within the walls; and so Brutus, not needing his group of assessors, set to work to clear away the matters of routine before him and to block from his mind all other thoughts.

He was haunted by the look on his mother's face as they had parted last night. Cassius was to blame; he had made some biting remarks about Cæsar's immoral relations with women, and Brutus had chanced to look at Servilia. She had coloured and dropped her eyes, and the memory of the things said years ago about her and Cæsar had sunk Brutus in depths of shame. There was no truth in the scandal; and yet there he had seen his mother's face pleading,

accusing, saying, "You told me about the conspiracy only to try me, you have done it all only because of me, I realise it at last." That was incredible. Deeds like the slaying of Cæsar did not spring from such darkly trivial motives. The godhead of life was rationality, and he that deviated from the rule threw himself under the hooves of mad horses. Cæsar was to be trampled.

Brutus settled down to the cases of property-transference, bleaching his mind dry of thought, concentrating on the formulæ. Yes, the Roman instinct was right. The formula saved. The letter saved, the spirit slew. The spirit was mad, shiftless, capable of endless evasions and analyses and explanations. Brutus was killing Cæsar because he was haunted by his mother's face, because the Salaminian senators perversely starved themselves to death; Brutus was enslaved by dark voices of cruelty from the past, voices crying for the purifying victim. "Kill and cleanse the world. Kill that the one may die for the many. Kill that infinite maggots may breed from the single body." Mad images. But the formula, the letter of legality, saved. The tyrant is the slayer of his fatherland: let him be slain.

A man came forward. He was emancipating a slave. The ceremony, a fictitious form based on the old idea of property as something captured, expressed the emancipation as a recovery of rights. A "claimant" stood forth and declared that the slave was no slave but a free man, while the master made no protest. Brutus signed to the lictor, who laid a wand on the slave's head. The master slapped the slave on the cheek, and turned him round, repeating and reversing the birth-screw, leaving him reborn in freedom.

Brutus saw the look of kindling joy in the slave's face. The poor wretch thought that all his problems were solved, and yet within an hour life would twine a fresh anxiety round his heart, and he would forget that he was slave or free; he would know only that he was once more hunted.

Hunted off the earth. Hunted by faces.

Brutus refused to think of Servilia. Let Cæsar be slain, for he slew his fatherland. Looking up, Brutus saw the statue of Pompeius staring with marble-gravity down at him. His thoughts grew confused. Pompeius was the man who

had actually put to death the father of Brutus in the disturbed days after Sulla's death. Yet Brutus had fought for him against Cæsar. He tried to recall his father's face, and failed, though he had been eight years at the time of his death. The world was blind. Death heaped on death, and no one knew why. Again the blood cried out despairingly, and again Brutus silenced it. The voices of the spirit were infinite in discord and deception. The word of the law was sufficient. I abide by my deed.

OTHER senators arrived. They looked into the hall, laid down their cloaks—leaving slaves to watch against thieves—and stood round in groups or went to pace along the Portico. A few, connoisseurs, took their seats, and, chin on palm, gave themselves up to the contemplation of the paintings; for some famous works by old masters hung on the walls: Cadmus sowing the dragons-teeth, and Europa carried off on her bull, by Antiphilos; a sacrifice of oxen, by Pausias, the still-life specialist, the first master to exploit foreshortening. Most of the senators, however, preferred to warm themselves after the litter-ride by a stroll in the Portico.

Two long covered colonnades ran parallel, leaving a grassy length between. In the courtyard were avenues of plane-trees, lighted by tumbling fountains and decorated by statues of wild beasts in marble and bronze. The crowd were pressing along the road between the Portico and the huge Theatre opposite, mostly interested only in gaining the open ground beyond, where they could play, dance, drink, and sing. But others, attracted vacantly by the gathering of their rulers, stood round to watch the arriving litters and to walk up and down the colonnades, alternately awed into respectful silence or suddenly bursting into noise and clumsy games. Acrobats, musicians, and buffoons were giving vaudeville turns on the stage of the Theatre, and there was a continuous flow of tittering people passing up the road through the door at the back of the scæna. The pillared façade of the Theatre that faced the road was the stage-end; and the rows of seats, curving round and rising to a great height, were on the other side, towards the river.

Amos stood at the marble gateway of the Portico and bit

his nails. He wanted to enter the Theatre, but his father had forbidden him; he wanted to join the throng in the Field, but that also as a Gentile rite of abomination was forbidden, though he had heard lads of the street talking about the ease with which girls were picked up on Anna's day. The rite of building a little hut of greenery made things too easy; one could get a girl under the very eyes of her family. But Amos remembered Karni and decided to obey his father. The rite somewhat resembled the Feast of the Tabernacles; but at the Synagogue they preached that this was because demons had taught the uncircumcised a parody of Yahwe's rite.

He stood watching the litters. That was paying homage to the Senate; it was patriotism without offending the Synagogue, and it might bring some business advantage. Suppose some great gentleman fell in the mud. Amos would dart forward, raise him up with tact and apologies for daring to offer aid, while insinuating a remark on the special dirt-destroying lye of the firm of *Fabullus and Ezra* on the Aventine.

OUT in the field a man with one ear was getting free drinks. He was a survivor of the expedition against the Parthians which had been routed ten years before.

"Their heavy horsemen ride in full armour," he told the gaping listeners. "Long coats of mail, helmets, and all. They're terrible to look at when they come charging with their long spears. Barge-poles the Greeks call them. But if they fall off the horses, they're helpless. They're jammed in the armour like in a tomb, and you can stick a sword up between their legs. They haven't any armour there, for they ride without stirrups and have to grip the horse's ribs. But the worst thing of all is the archers. We thought they'd run out of arrows, but up came camel after camel with fresh supplies. By Hercules, if you looked up, you got one in your eye, for they shot up, to come down over our shields. That's the kind of people the Parthians are. Has anyone got another flask?"

More wine was purchased, and the man squinted into his cup.

"I'll tell you some more. They come marching up with

put the pie in as evidence. If they've eaten it, I'll expose them."

The conspirators, mingling with their fellows, discussed the same questions with the urbane sarcasm of a Roman noble. The first-comers drew strength from the appearance of other senators whom they knew to be in the plot. It had been too dangerous to hold a general meeting, but they knew one another's names. Now, meeting, they gave no sign. They exchanged salutations punctiliously, and walked on; but they were counting the numbers and feeling more relieved. Seventy-five senators. The slaying could not be taken as an act of unbalanced aggression. It would be seen as it was, the act of the State against its usurper. As soon as Cæsar lay dead, Brutus was to address the Senate, announce the causes of the deed and the return of constitutional government, and call on Antonius to hold an election for Cæsar's successor to the vacant consulship and chief priesthood. Before nightfall the Republic would be quietly and thoroughly re-established, as if Cæsar had never been. Could there be a stronger proof that the state was enduring and the usurper a mere excrescence?

Cassius arrived and took his seat in the Curia, waiting for Brutus to finish. He watched Brutus sombrely proceeding with the details of the cases and thought how changed Brutus was from the febrile despairs of the night before. The man looked sturdy as bronze, indeed a figure of the primordial lawgiver. Cassius felt an unwilling respect, and, more strongly, a teasing wish to disturb, to probe, to dissect that impressive calm. He himself disliked the office of judicial chairmanship at Rome, though he had enjoyed acting as judge over disputes in Syria. There he had felt unfettered. At Rome everything was artificial, suppressed; everyone was looking out to trip up his fellows; all action was hampered by minutiae. For the first time Cassius realised how he envied Cæsar in his dictatorship, though the envy faded back into habitual anger and contempt. There was no virtue in such power; it affronted the intelligence which demanded a fraternity of competing equals, if life was to be worth living.

But as Cassius looked at Brutus, he again felt envy. Cæsar had appointed Brutus and Cassius as the main prætors of

the year, and Cassius had been enraged that Brutus should be city prætor, while he was second in rank. Without feeling jealous of Brutus, he felt insulted by Cæsar; and the rankling of that insult had made him discover the necessity of removing Cæsar. If the Parthians were to be compelled to deliver up their thousands of Roman prisoners, who could better command the army than Cassius who had held the eastern frontier for years? Cassius would have accepted, however angrily, the insult of being turned down by the Senate; but to be turned down and supplanted by Cæsar was different. The anger that emerged was robbed of egoism. The outraged self found its pain to be identical with the pain of the community. To hell with those who would call it thwarted ambition!

TREBONIUS and Decimus Brutus halted to exchange a few words beside a lipping fountain. They wanted to babble out their hopes and fears, their plans and irresolutions; but though no one seemed near, they did not speak a word of what was seething in their heads. Decimus asked politely about the health of the mother of Trebonius. Her asthma was better. Very good news. Why not try a concoction of black-currants, syrup, and mint? That was a family recipe.

Trebonius assured him that he would suggest it to his mother, but knew he would do no such thing. For she was a very strong-willed old lady, and had her own ideas. She insisted that the smoke of burnt parsley roots eased her, though it did nothing of the sort; and after she had inhaled she would choke herself rather than admit the truth.

Decimus listened distractedly to the thanks of Trebonius. His thoughts had turned to his own mother, Sempronia. Dead she was; that vivid face closed in death, masked with greeny pallor; those restless hands laid out straight; flat hands, hands that had clawed for life in the death-throes. Furiously she had died, throwing off the bed-clothes, shamelessly imploring the doctors to put one of the bed-slaves to bed with her. She had declared that only one thing could keep her alive; she would never die if there was someone embracing her. She had said it all in front of Decimus; and he had blushed, and she had raved at him. A fearful

end. Fever, the doctors explained, only fever. And then, during the night, she had inveigled one of the slaves to bed after all, and died in his arms.

Decimus wondered why the memory returned—unless it was because Sempronia had always disliked Cæsar, and had tried to stop her son from joining the army in Gaul. She had died on the eve of his departure, and he had gone off to act as a lieutenant under Cæsar. A wish to be back in those battle-days, dangerous and filled with comradeship, swept over Decimus. He had commanded the fleet that destroyed the Veneti, while Cæsar and the land-army watched from the cliffs. They had sailed up close and slashed through the ropes and sailyards with long hooks at the ends of poles; and then had stormed the heavier ships at ease. The wind of the combat blew in his hair a moment, and he felt like the smell of corpses in the night the treachery with which he and the others were surrounding Cæsar. But it was too late now, and the decision had been right.

Trebonius too felt shaken. He and Decimus had been in charge of the operations against Massilia, and had grown to like one another dearly. It was then that Decimus had beaten the relieving fleet sent by the conservatives, and had saved Cæsar, who was operating perilously in Spain. They had both fought through the Gallic War; they had seen Cæsar at bay before Alesia, besieging a strong mountain-town, and besieged in turn by a vast Gallic army. They had gone through much together, following Cæsar.

A great weariness descended on Trebonius. Men fought, and there was no end to the fighting. But Rome must live. Rome was the law, and the voice of the law must speak on; for by the law alone could mankind be saved.

CASCA and his brother passed. They bowed carelessly to Trebonius and Decimus, as they had bowed to scores of others. The slaves, moving at their backs, saw no difference in the salute—and watchful-eyed are the slaves in a state where the masters must live in incessant fear of their slaves as spies—but Trebonius and Decimus know what spoke in those well-bred nods. Torment and determination, and the blood pouring rapturously like a torrent past the cataract

of the ears, diving for its ancient home in the earth. Blood that cried out for a sacrifice, the earth-spirit trembling on the verge of birth and death, and crying out to man: "Rescue me, child of darkness, pour out the strength that will draw me across the last barrier into the summer of fruitfulness. Without your aid I sink back into the pits of winter."

"A pleasantly mild morning," said Casca.

They moved on; and further down the collonade, stopping beside Basilus, inquired with friendly unconcern, "Have you seen Cimber yet? We promised to give him our support in the petition for his brother's recall."

Nobody had seen Cimber. That was worrying, as the presentation of his petition was an integral part of the plot. As if a messenger had whispered the news among the conspirators, all noticed Cimber's absence at the same time, and began searching anxiously for him; though with faces sharpened by control in the same courteous aloofness.

CICERO's arrival was the signal for hoots from the crowd outside and for a stir among the senators; for Cicero was the philosopher of Republicanism, the sole figure of importance still representing an opposition to the dominant popular party. He was aware of his role and maintained it largely by ironical comments. It was under the shadow of the authority wielded by him in however limited a fashion that the conspiracy had found its confidence; but the younger men who were conspiring had considered it wrong to entangle the old orator in the scheme which they knew he would have welcomed.

Cicero was accustomed to the mob's dislike. Gone were the days when it had hurt him deeply; he took it all as part of the tribute to his position. He had some strong slaves at his back and did not fear violence. Walking along the portico, he accepted the greetings of the senators; for all admired him as a national figure, and even the shadow-senators, Cæsar's nominees, knew that Cæsar had insisted on disregarding Cicero's politics and considering Cicero only as a great man-of-letters.

The chief interest of the senators today was the question

whether Cæsar had some scheme ready about the kingship. Cæsar had tried to settle the rumours by arranging for Antonius to offer him a crown at the Lupercal Festival; he had then refused the crown and ordered a note of his refusal to be entered in the Records. It was power, not a name, that he coveted; but his enemies were doing their best to spread the tale that he sought the traditionally-abhorred title, King of Rome. Cæsar had disdainfully exposed his attitude when he said to some protesting followers, in explanation of his clemency, "I wish nothing more than that I should be like myself, and my enemies like themselves."

And when some of the crowd had hailed him as king, he had replied, "I am no king, but Cæsar." But because he had protected from two conservative tribunes the men who started the cry, he had given further excuse to his detractors.

WOULD Cæsar never come? Brutus had finished, but did not wish to leave his seat. It was easy to keep intact his self-control while looking down on the world from the seat of judgment, but it would be harder among his fellows. Cassius waited irritably, tapping the arms of his seat. Dolabella had come. That was a good sign. He would be with Cæsar if Cæsar had suspected anything. But the sun was clear in the sky, and there was no sign of Cæsar.

In the portico it was noticed that Cimber had been present all the while, talking with a friend at the farther end on a seat under a flower-bush. That was a great relief, and it was all the conspirators could do to stop from rubbing their hands and laughing outright. From the Theatre opposite came a continuous hum, the hive-noise of conglomerate humanity. The shouts of the merry-makers on their way to the Field, the chatter of the street, the subdued conversations of the senators and their attendants, the chinkling rustle of water—the sounds wove a lively background to the clear, faintly-grey sunlight.

Someone had dropped a bottle of wine on the pavement; and a disconsolate, speechless drunkard was eyeing the wasted liquor, unable to tear himself away from the painful sight, revolving in his dim head impracticable schemes for reclaiming wine from mud. A woman was seated on the roots

of one of the plane trees that lined the street, hushing her baby by suckling it. A quarrel was going on between another mother and a man who had been dirtied in the crush by her sick baby. Outside the Theatre were small Jew-boys begging, and a man who with some shells on a tray challenged the onlookers to point out under which shell he placed a bean. Costermongers had set up stalls. At one stall a strong-wristed fellow was breaking apples between his palms to please his girl, while nearby an aggrieved man was looking for a vanished enemy. "I opened my mouth to tell him what I thought of him, and he spat into it."

Birds flew about the tree-tops. City-sparrows gave themselves up to love-chases, knowing that there would be abundant crumbs when the crowd dispersed.

Where was Cæsar? The time for the session had arrived, and the senators were filing into the Curia, discussing the latest money-reports from the Forum; but no word had come that Cæsar was seen on the road.

"WHAT do you think is the reason?"

Brutus stared impassively ahead. "Can't you bear waiting? By God, I feel I've been waiting all my life for this moment." All doubt had passed from him as he stepped down from the tribunal. He was exalted, like Porcia. He gazed up at the statue of Pompeius and felt as stable as the man of stone. It was right that Cæsar should die in the building set up by his great opponent Pompeius. Stare down on me, man of stone; I am your equal; I am your avenger; when I strike, the hand of stone strikes with me.

Cassius was flustered by the calm of Brutus, for until now he had dominated their relationship. Suddenly he felt that Brutus was indeed the stronger, that the mask of strength had a real face behind it. A love of the world overcame him, and his heart sang. He loved everyone, for they all had that reality of virtue if they faced the testing moment. Even Cæsar he loved, but would slay nevertheless. He would slay him all the more happily. Under his cloak he grasped the dagger, and with it the large pearl-pendant that Cæsar had given Tertulla. Gossipers said that the gift had been made for a fleshly return, but Cassius knew that a lie. Cæsar

had given it out of fondness for Servilia, because he had been Servilia's lover when Tertulla was a baby. Cassius had abstracted the pearl from Tertulla's jewel-box that morning, and was now embarrassed by it. He had had some vague idea of dropping it on Cæsar's corpse; for he would have none of the man's bounty. Tertulla would weep when she saw the pearl gone. He prayed that she would not remember about it till she had borne her child. Perhaps he would take it back after all. Others would misinterpret the gesture if he threw it away. But again he marvelled at the obtuseness of Brutus. How could the fool hide from what everyone knew about Servilia?

A slave came hurrying in.

Had Cæsar been seen? No, a false alarm. News for one of the senators that his wife had fallen downstairs and broken her leg. "Which leg?" the senator asked, as if that was the main point; but the slave didn't know. Apologies to his friends for his wife's gaucherie; the senator decided he had better go home.

LISTEN to the voices passing. Is this the world for which we slay, for which we are ready to die?

"You know how to keep a secret," said a senator, approaching Casca, and taking him by a fold of the toga. "But Brutus has told me everything."

Casca gave a wild look round, gripping at the dagger hung under his left armpit. Some of the conspirators noticed his face and drew nearer, determined to cut the man down and sell their lives dearly if need be. But the man went on airily: "Why haven't you told your friends that you're standing for the tribuneship? I wish you the best of luck."

Casca nodded, stammered, and broke away. "I must speak to my brother. I've remembered something."

AN hour has passed. Why hadn't Cæsar come? The senators who knew nothing were stretching themselves, bored; but the conspirators forced themselves to speak as if the delay was perfectly natural. Cæsar would come. He must come.

Cassius left Brutus and walked up to the painting by Pausias. Beautiful white bulls crowned with flowers were being led to the sacrifice. The beasts must die that man may live. They are his fosterers, and the dark gods have their faces. The victim becomes the god. That is the law of compensation. In eating flesh we partake of the beasts that died for us. When is the end of it all?

What of the scrupulous eye of Pausias that could see man and beast so purely, set them both down so beautifully, so unchangingly? Still are the beasts led to slaughter, under the eternal eye.

The clear sunlight tautened. The world was still, like a raped woman. Cassius felt himself falling between two pulse-beats, stranded on an ever-widening sense of loss. Day and night. All things flow; but the flux is a beautiful gyre of unrepeatable energy; it flows, but it returns. It is immortal, a shape as well as a crumbling, man as well as the maggots in the corpse. But never the same shape, the same man. Cassius will die, and there will be a beautiful world blessed by his unavailing love.

There seemed to be no air in the long hall of veined marbles with trophies from the wars of Pompeius hanging on the columns.

"I SPEND my time writing," said Cicero, fitting his fingertips together, and addressing his audience with slightly-raised eyebrows. "What else is there to do while we are, shall I say, ah, so fortunate as to possess an official who capably engrosses to himself the whole work of the State?"

He turned to the nearest man and fixed him with a half-frown, then smiled. "I've turned Platonist. I write of what exists only in heaven. My dear sir, the title of the book is *Civic Duty*."

He left the group, knowing that in a few moments his jests would be whispered along the rows, and went to accost Brutus. But Brutus, noticing the movement, walked away. Cicero was hurt. Brutus was really too boorish sometimes; he wasn't even truthful; he had told a most discourteous lie in refusing to stay at one of Cicero's villas a while ago. Too vain and bad-tempered. A pity, since he might have achieved

something if he had only had some decency and common sense.

Cicero looked round for a friend, but his eye was caught by Europa in the picture. She was riding her god-bull, one hand resting on the broad brow; and something in her young, guileless face suggested the face of Tullia—Cicero's beloved daughter, now dead in childbirth, after being divorced by Dolabella. The grief of the last year stirred in Cicero brokenly, and he set his jaw. The world should not see his sorrow in his eyes, even if it read his book of consolation addressed to the lost girl. Thrice married, she had been yet so young, so entirely his. He felt for a moment that his regretful love was so great that it could create for her an existence beyond death if there was none there already. But what was the use? He would die and there would be no one to sustain the dream.

EVERY pulse a stab. They had waited there for ever. Why didn't they march and stab the tyrant in his house? But the people would cry out and defend him. He must come beneath their daggers before they could stab.

Cassius stood with hands behind his back, looking morosely at the others. Then he moved across and rejoined Brutus. Close to him came a senator, Popilius Lænas, who also stopped at the side of Brutus, gave a quick glance round, and said in a hurried voice, "Maybe you'll have your way, but everything depends on speed." Then he walked off.

Brutus and Cassius exchanged glances of questioning panic. Lænas was not in the conspiracy: what did he know? If the facts had leaked out to one stranger, why not to another? Cæsar must have heard. That was the only possible explanation for his absence when he was so keen to settle all business holding him up from the Parthian War. In a few moments the soldiers would come.

Brutus and Cassius felt the air rattle hoarsely in their windpipes. The wish to run and hide spoke in their eyes, then the emotion subsided. The sense of fate returned. There was no escape, not even for Cæsar. The hour would come, with or without treachery. It wasn't death they feared. The thought came to both at once. Death was

nothing; they did not fear it. By virtue of the infinite triviality of the individual's death they had joined to slay Cæsar. They were taking from Cæsar nothing worth having, and they were doing their duty to the State. If they were afraid to die, they would be mean-hearted murderers; but they had no fear, and righteously they slew.

But would they ever have the chance to slay? Time passed, told in the thick pulsations of the blood. Time was hammering like a fugitive at a dark door. Let me in. Let me out. It made no difference. Cæsar must die. Lonely were they all, lost wayfarers looking for a window with a light in it. They would be lonelier yet, for death must come. To realise the brotherly compact of action: in that was the only solace and release.

Brutus and Cassius stood calm and resigned. They loved one another as they looked into each other's eyes, regardless of the heavy pulsations of time, the noisy groups of senators, the dagger that pained against the ribs.

YET time throbbed. Time was a clot of blood in the heart, a clot that could not pass the arteries. It was slowing down the pulse, swelling the heart with unendurable pangs. The heart would break.

Trebonius fingered his dagger. It was either Cæsar or himself. At the first suspicion that the plot had been discovered, he would stab himself. He had fought loyally for Cæsar while he thought that Cæsar's enemies were taking an unfair constitutional advantage, but from the moment that Cæsar had made it clear he clung to the power he had gained, Trebonius had known that murder was necessary. There was no need to think about it.

He knew what his old mother would say: "Are you standing there alive, Gaius, with no country to call your own. A free man has only a free country. You are an exile, Gaius. An exile should die, or fight his way back home. If a slave is obstreperous, I beat him. A despot is the greatest slave of all, and the most obstreperous. Give me a staff and I will go teach this Cæsar his place."

A man could not be shamed before his women-folk, and the destiny of Rome was freedom. But Trebonius felt his face

stiff with heat. He had fought in the courts for the legal fact as he saw it; he had fought with swords for the cause of Rome as he saw it; and he hated arguments and blows. He was a man of peace; he wanted quiet, a notebook to scribble in, a villa somewhere in the hills.

THREE messengers arrived in quick succession from Porcia, asking Brutus if he were well. He couldn't understand what had happened to her. How could she be so inconsiderate? Then a fourth slave, whom he recognised as of his household, entered, looking flustered. He saw Brutus and hurried up. Porcia had swooned. She had been standing at the door ever since he left, and then suddenly she fainted. They had all been frightened and thought it best to bring the news. Doctors had been called.

Brutus made a stride to go, forgetting all about the conspiracy. But he stopped short; the plot in which he was caught jerked at him as if by a score of fettering ropes. He couldn't go, not if her life depended on seeing him. He felt her life flowing away, and his life with it—down out of the wounded thigh of life.

"Tell her when she recovers that I am doing what she would prefer," he said, and turned sharply away. The slave looked after him, wondering at the callousness of masters, and remembering how night and day the dread of being sold apart from his wife tore at him.

"CYTHERIS has a mole on her left buttock," said Dolabella. "I think it's most attractive, and I intend to see that it's made fashionable."

"But what are you going to do about Antonius?" asked one of the group who objected to levity.

"Squash him," said Dolabella, with lifted brows and pursed lips.

THE treadmill of time. There was a treadmill for lifting pillars in the Forum of Iulius that was being built. Cassius had noticed it as he passed. The men climbed and swung with the great wheel-cage while the axle slowly wound the rope

and drew it through the pulley. Up swung the column slowly. But the treadmill went faster—fast enough to tear the men's feet and knees and hands; fast enough to leave their faces distorted with the effort.

He beckoned to Decimus Brutus. Decimus approached, unable to crush altogether a sense of observed guilt at being addressed by a man whom everyone knew to be a friend. Yet it would be more suspicious for the conspirators to keep strangely apart from one another than to be normally friendly.

"Will you go and see what Cæsar is doing?" said Cassius. He had intended to add, "You are more his friend than Marcus or myself," but he held his tongue in time. "He will think it less peculiar for you to go."

Decimus did not question that point. He stared blankly at the door. "Will I go to him?" he repeated, fighting down his repugnance. At least it would be action. He had faced Cæsar last night, drinking wine with him; he would face him yet with a dagger; why should he not face him at his house? "Yes," he said stolidly. "I'll go."

Marcus Brutus had listened. "Yes, it's the best thing to be done."

"Of course it is," said Cassius, emphatically, feeling that he ought to have consulted Brutus first. "Go at once, Decimus, or I feel that we will fail."

Decimus Brutus turned and walked away with quick, soldierly steps. He would have liked to run all the way; but he was hardly in training for such a feat, and what would the people say at the sight? A sour grin crept over his face. Not even a horse to ride; he would have to be jogged along in the litter. He had never felt quite at ease in Cæsar's presence; he had never been able to guess what Cæsar was thinking; and sometimes the rapidity of thought and act had bewildered him. Once that bewilderment had earned a reprimand. Well, it was Decimus Brutus who was to do the hurrying now, and Cæsar was the laggard.

Quickly he gave his commands, instructing the brawny litter-bearers to choose the unfrequented side-streets and strike as soon as possible into the Forum, at the side of which lay Cæsar's official residence. As he climbed into the litter, he thought what a pity it was his mother had died.

BRUTUS and Cassius stared after him. Both were thinking that they would not like the task. But was it worse than scouting in enemy country, acting as a spy in an enemy camp? That was how Decimus had taken it. The other conspirators noted the departure and guessed what was being done. Cassius, to remove any suspicious appearance, went round, mentioning to the chief senators that Decimus Brutus had gone to see if Cæsar was indisposed, and to learn his wishes for the day. After that the gathering settled down more resignedly. The senators took their seats.

Brutus felt the sense of fate growing stronger. It consoled him, like a firm, quiet hand on a frightened child. The child does not understand the situation any more clearly, but it knows that somewhere in the world is a power unaffected by the fear that is tearing its own fibres. Somewhere dwelt peace. Outside all this noise and failing effort there lay a necessity, a universal need uttering itself through broken hearts and bodies, speeches unfinished and gestures snapt-off ineffectively. What was faith but the ability to accept one's part without seeing how it joined with the other parts to produce a significant whole? He would make his gesture and be glad of it, even though he never saw its end, its expected results.

Then the division of his own life reasserted itself. Porcia was lying wounded, perhaps dying. All life was on the death-bed, and he was the surgeon. The man that hated vice hated mankind. To kill the transgressor was to exterminate all existence; for all transgressed. No matter. The gesture of righteousness remained, a divine revelation in a world without eyes or ears to know it.

Side by side with his hunger to return to Porcia he felt a rage against her for fainting, a resentment because she had ever let him leave her side. He wanted to take her throat in his hands and shake her back to consciousness, to make her tell him something—what, he didn't know.

CASCA was praying under his breath: "Iuppiter, Greatest and Best, I am not acting out of ambition. I don't care what becomes of me. I swear that I won't stand for the tribuneship if we succeed. I'll sell that confiscated estate I bought cheap. I'll give the money to the shrine on the Capitol."

Time was a bow bent further and further back, with the arrow aimed straight at the heart. It would crack. The cord screeched faintly, a thin cry of nerves tortured almost beyond the power to record sensation.

CASSIUS felt a wish to quarrel with Brutus, anything to rouse him from the apathy into which he had fallen. But at that moment he heard the sound of some new arrivals. Glancing up, he saw Marcus Antonius enter, followed by his two brothers. At once he knew that everything was all right. Antonius had indolently refused to come earlier than necessary. He had sent a slave to bring the news from Cæsar's house as soon as Cæsar set out, and he himself had raced out with his brothers by the Ratumenan Gate round the other side of the Flaminian Circus. Cæsar was coming after all. Nothing had gone wrong.

"Cæsar will be here shortly," he said, and Brutus realised what he meant. They both sat up in their prætorian chairs more confidently. The entry of Antonius and his brothers was greeted by loud hails from the minor senators and by whispers among the more independent. "Government by the House of the Antonii!" remarked an elderly man with watery eyes that he wiped with his toga-hem. "Dolabella's a scamp, but I'd prefer to see Cæsar leave him as a balance to this trio." Gaius was one of the lesser prætors, and Lucius, a tribune.

Gradually a murmur was heard in the distance, swelling nearer. Cæsar's litter on its way was being applauded by the populace. The senators braced themselves one and all, some envious, some afraid, all dimly fascinated. The officials in charge bustled about. A few senators who had been idling in the porch looked round for seats. The magistrates took their special chairs, and an attendant gave a last-minute inspection of Cæsar's gold chair on its dais. The shouts grew louder; and the news spread through the hall that Cæsar had been on the point of postponing the session through an indisposition, but Decimus Brutus had persuaded him to come.

The shouts were at the door of the Curia. Cæsar had arrived.

After the shouts the hush seemed ominous. Cæsar was

waiting while the entrails of a victim were examined. The senators stirred, settling for comfortable positions, though they knew they would have to rise as Cæsar entered. Then Cæsar entered, clad in a purple gown, and shod with the tall red shoes of the Alban kings.

Though weary, he did not look ill. Aging under the stress of his burden, he yet walked with an easy dignity, his quick eyes seeming absorbed in his inner computations, and at the same time taking in every detail of the scene. The lines curving at the side of his mouth had grown deeper; there was a sunken intensity about his face, relieved from the effect of travail and exhaustion by the concentration in the eyes and the sympathetic fullness of the lips. As he entered, the senators rose; and he stood for a moment in silent acceptance of the salutation. Every senator there felt himself singled out by those penetrating eyes, which, however, did not rove at all over the rows. Some of the conspirators paled, and felt their knees unsteady; all, for a pulse, felt that the plot was impossible.

Then Cæsar moved on, an ivory tablet and steel stylus in his hand, and the Senate resumed their seats. Before the session commenced it was his custom to hear what recommendations or suggestions any of the members might wish to urge personally. As he came forward, some senators, Popilius Lænas among them, pressed to speak with him; and with an uprush of terror Brutus remembered the equivocal remark that Lænas had made. Was the conspiracy to be betrayed now and the prize snatched from their grasp? Cassius too had noticed Lænas; he turned his head away, unable to bear the sight, and relaxed in his chair. Let the end come as it would; there was a malign pleasure in feeling the whole responsibility of action suddenly taken from one's hands.

But Brutus stared at Cæsar and Lænas, watching their lips, convinced that he could hear their voices though they were out of earshot. Cæsar nodded and smiled, and Lænas walked away, having gained for a Greek friend Cæsar's promise of enfranchisement. A busybody, who liked to impress with laconic mystifications, he had referred, in addressing Brutus, to a business deal that he knew Brutus should hear about by

letter before evening: a house belonging to a common friend which Brutus was haggling over, and for which the owner meant to declare he had other bidders.

Cæsar went on towards his chair. Brutus and Cassius could not forbear to exchange a single glance of congratulation. A grateful joy spoke in their eyes, a deep upwelling once more of love for one another. Cassius reached out his hand and pressed the hand of Brutus, and a warm current of emotion passed from palm to palm, a blissful wedding of wills, a hymeneal contact of friendship. For a moment each knew what a woman feels at the first bridal throe of sweetness.

One of the attendants at the side nudged his fellow, and whispered, grinning.

Neither Brutus nor Cassius liked to look at the corner where Cimber was sitting; they felt that to stare might be to intimidate him, and everything depended on him keeping his nerve. But, without looking, they grew aware that someone was approaching Cæsar's chair from Cimber's direction. Yes, it was Cimber. Cæsar and Cimber began talking. Others of the conspirators drifted down and gathered round. Cimber appealed to them, his hands waving excitedly.

He is getting too excited, thought Brutus, himself still under the spell of mated contentment, feeling no haste. But Cimber would spoil things with his excitement, and that fear reawoke uneasiness.

Signing to Cassius, Brutus rose; and the two prætors stepped down to join their friends. Trebonius, seeing that the time for action had come, walked up to Marcus Antonius, who was striving not to show nervousness at the prospect of a formal speech. It was an easy job to speechify before a tavern-full of boozers or an army of soldiers; but set debates, arguments on legality, pretty turnings of phrase and neat antitheses, without which the best arguments would fail before these connoisseurs of verbiage: that was different. Trebonius saw that Antonius was half drunk, and felt an impatient anger at having to save him. Not that Trebonius wanted anyone, even Cæsar, to die; but he was sick of a debauched generation.

"Will you step aside and have a few words with me. It's about Dolabella."

"Certainly." Antonius was pleased to escape for a while from the despairing effort to memorise the speech he had laboriously fabricated. He had a slight headache. Curse Gaius and his parties.

Antonius came down from his curule chair and accompanied Trebonius towards the vestibule. Over a dozen of the conspirators had joined Cimber and were clustered about Cæsar. More were coming into the open space. Cimber was holding forth, gesticulating, his voice rapidly becoming uncontrolled, as he pleaded that Cæsar should repeal his brother's banishment. The fool, thought Brutus, he's losing his head, he'll scream in a moment.

Cæsar, who had glanced round at the group, noticed the rising violent intonation of Cimber. At first he put it down to the man's emotions as he spoke on his brother's behalf, then he felt that the voice had an overstress not so easily explained. He turned a sharp scrutiny upon Cimber, who faltered and stopped in mid-sentence. Decimus Brutus had the readiness to take up the plea, but even in his voice Cæsar detected a nagging note of hardness. The men pushed closer. Cæsar sensed to the full the inexplicable excitement in their air and manner, their voices.

"Stand back," he said, rising.

They drew back, quietened, and then began all speaking at once. They felt the hush like a lightning-stroke exposing their inmost selves. They were terrified. Casca edged round towards the side. Cæsar stared again at Cimber and then at Decimus Brutus. He felt the presence of a tremendous danger, and his brain worked quickly. The conspirators were momentarily appalled by his glance. Never had they seen such vulturine fierceness in his eyes; they felt like crucified men at whom birds and the pitiless beaks of light are tearing. They shrank still further back, and it was all Cimber could do to stop himself from falling on the ground, grovelling, crying for mercy. But the firm hand of Decimus Brutus was laid on his back. He pressed forwards again, almost foaming; his tongue slavered. There was a swaying movement among the group, as each man strove to push the other in front of himself. One and all they fought against the impulse to run, to abandon the enterprise, to cry out in

confession. If one of them had broken away and gone back to his seat, they would all have gone. But the personality of Cæsar that broke them also held them there. Brutus felt the fiery compulsion of Cæsar's presence, his fearless eyes. He forced himself to raise his own eyes and stare back. He looked Cæsar in the face and knew that he would never lose the image of those searching eyes until his death, and that he would die beneath their scornful gaze. But something beyond either shame or fear was driving him also on. His body set rigidly and he saw the statue of Pompeius, his father's murderer, overhead. He too was stone. He would strike, and the blow would be that of the man of stone.

The other senators were gaping at the scene on the floor of the hall, gripped by an obscure and deepening perturbation. Why, they could not say; but they felt something was wrong. The change from an ordinary scene of petitioning to a drama of menace occurred almost in a flash; and the onlookers stopped in mid-sentence, turning to watch, holding the sides of their chairs or catching at one another's arms.

Cæsar felt that he had one chance. They dared not face him. He must walk boldly through the group, straight through them, before they had time to think. It was his one hope. Without formulating what the situation was, he knew that he was in a deadly snare. He made a step forward, and at that moment Casca, who had successfully edged round to his back, leaned towards him. Cæsar saw the movement reflected in the eyes of the men before him. Casca's hand lifted, and the resistance of the group stiffened, closed. Cæsar was lost.

He turned swiftly now towards Casca, hoping to break through the side, and the magic of his eyes was ended. Cimber, stealthily, painfully, as if fighting against a great force of wind, stretched out and grasped at Cæsar's toga. He caught the cloth and pulled at it in a weeping frenzy of joy. Casca, biting through his lip, leaped at Cæsar, aiming his dagger blindly at the face, but he was dazed with the terror of the act. The dagger, slipping, gashed Cæsar on the neck. But the gesture was enough. The blood lust of the others was unleashed. They no longer feared Cæsar, they saw only the stricken quarry. They

sprang at him, ripping their gowns as they tore out their daggers, snarling, lips drawn back from the wet, hungry teeth. The remaining conspirators dashed down from their seats, roused by the spectacle, assured that all would be well, eager to flesh their daggers; for thus had it been agreed. Only an equality of guilt could bind them all entirely to the deed and its consequences.

Cæsar saw the wild eyes, the crowding forms. Men that had fought at his side, men whom he had favoured, men with whom he had shared his last rations of food, his jests, his life. Never once had he hidden from a danger that they must face; he had fought from one end of the world to the other, and now the men with whom he had broken the bread of his intimacy were stabbing at his heart.

But he had no appeal to make. He drew the stylus from his tablet and fought back at his enemies with that weak slip of steel. Casca's brother, answering Casca's scream, had struck Cæsar in the side. But Cæsar felt no pain. He knew he was about to die, but that was no great matter. He was thinking only of the bitter desolation of his death, hedged in by men whom he had loved as fellow-soldiers, and, beyond them, the world that none but he could rule with insight and understanding power. But with the blood that rushed clamorously to his head came a further knowledge. His work would not die. No casual betrayal could destroy the new depth of loyalty that he had brought into being.

That was the truth he wished to know. How could he see it supremely and die with happiness?

They were stabbing at him, screaming, tearing. He fought maniacally, writhing, charging, striking out with his slender piece of steel, striving hard to understand before they swarmed over him and trampled him to death. Had he failed? What did this ambush mean? Madly he stared at the faces before him, faces increasing, surging, rising and falling like waves of the sea, faces of his friends distorted out of recognition. Suddenly he remembered. On this very day, 15th March, nineteen years before he had been elected High Priest, and had entered the Temple of Vesta, where no other man might go. There, in the Holy of Holies, he had held in his hands the Sacred Thing of Rome, the earthen

jar symbolic of the Eternal Empire, which no man but he might touch. He was back there now, holding it in his hands. He had not failed. One fall, and he would have smashed that fragile jar. But he had not fallen, and the jar was safe. These traitorous fools might kill him, but the need was in the blood of the people who had loved him. Ah, if he but knew the man in whose hands he might place that pledge of Rome's fate, the jar of sealed earth. But someone would take it.

The fight could not last long. Sobbing, howling, the men closed in, hacking at his bleeding body. The toga was torn off and trampled into a mess of blood and dust, and he was left in a light tunic. He fought his way towards the statue of Pompeius, his trained instinct seeking for an object against which he could place his back. As he struggled, another dagger found his throat. Cassius struck him in the shoulder. Brutus aimed at his heart and hit him in the thigh. He was falling. Cæsar was dead.

As he fell, he saw the jar of earth falling out of his hands, and he saw the hands of another man stretch out of the darkness and catch the jar, and it did not matter that he did not know whose hands he had seen. He knew only that Rome would stand and his work would go on, and that was all he wished to know; and the passionate bitterness, the anguish of regret and horror, faded into a great peace and blessedness.

CÆSAR IS DEAD

III

HERE IS FREEDOM

THE late-comers could do no more than thrust their daggers into the wounds already made on the bloody corpse.

Brutus pushed his way through and raised his arm to address the Senate, calling on Cicero, the vindicated champion of the Republic. But there was no one left in the tiers of seats. The senators had crowded aghast out of the building while Cæsar was fighting his way towards the statue of Pompeius. Two had made to help their stricken patron; but overwhelmed by the hopelessness of the scene, they joined the fleeing crowd. Outside, the trembling senators had hastily collected their attendants and made off. Sinking back in the cushions, they furtively plucked at the litter-curtains, looking out on the buildings around, finding it incredible that the crust of lazy sunlight had not tightened and crushed the world. For their own heads were tautly pressed in helms of heat.

At once there was collision and the street was impassable with litters. The senators in the rear told their men to make off northwards and then regain Rome by alley-ways. A few with villas in Etruria gave orders to be carried into the country-side, and then dreaded that in this collapse of all bonds the litter-slaves would murder them and toss their corpses to the frogs in a nettled ditch. Others gave up the idea of reaching home in a litter and plunged through the mob, guarded by equally frightened slaves. Broken litters filled the streetway, and the stalls were overturned.

"Cæsar is dead."

The cry was taken up. It ran through the audience within the Theatre; it struck the stage where an acrobat was doing handsprings and balancing a shield; it sped behind the

scenes and interrupted a quarrel between two dancers. A startled harpist broke the string that he was tuning. A slave-girl choked in mid-swallow of some bread and honey, and lay gasping; no one thought to beat her on the back. In the cavea of the Theatre a hush had rippled along the seats. The people stopped stamping on the floor to show their impatience in waiting for the chief turn, a tenor. In the silence a wailing baby was heard. "Sssh," cried the neighbours, and the mother placed her hand tightly over the baby's face, almost sending it into convulsions. The lad who was stealing his hand under the girl's cloak drew back. A woman wept. Then a voice rang out, "They've killed him."

The crowd rose in a great wave of abject dismay. They pushed along the rows, shoving and treading on the weaker. Women's dresses caught and were ripped; men's gowns were trampled and pulled off. Three children were killed. An old man fell down in a fit, and was spared, because a fit was a sacred seizure. The people gave him room, and, while still pressing on, found time to listen to his horrible cries, hoping that some divine message of guidance or comfort could come from his twisted lips. Sandals dropped off, but no one dared pause to pick them up.

Who had killed Cæsar? The people feared that a band of murderers would swoop upon them, thrusting torches into all the windows of the Theatre and roasting the rearmost alive. The clatters and bangs of the stampede sounded as if the Theatre itself was collapsing. The pillars would come crashing down in a moment. Cæsar had fallen. What else could stand? Someone in fury threw a wine-flask from the upper tiers on the people struggling lower down. It hit a man and laid his head open, and a fragment slashed a girl's cheek. Then it splintered on the floor, where it cut the feet of those who pushed on.

"Cæsar is dead."

A cry of despair sounded across the Field of Mars. At first it was a wordless shout. No one knew what was happening, but a cold hand grasped the heart of all. The noise of merriment died away. The festival ceased as if the sky had suddenly darkened with storm. Then the message of fear became articulate. "They've killed him." The news passed

from mouth to mouth. There was no shouting now. Girls crawled with flushed faces and knotted hair from under the bushes and the tents of cloaks, calling for their mothers. The family-groups ran together, and the children cried and clutched at their parents. The vendors tried to close up their stalls quickly and drag them off towards the shelter of the trees along the river or in the grove. A vast sobbing murmur arose, and hundreds swore later that blackness fell on the world. The sky was bruised flesh. Those who spoke of it said they thought the wolf of doom had at last swallowed the sun. Abandoning their picnics, the parties rushed from the Field, without thought making detours eastwards to avoid the spot where Cæsar had fallen.

The youths who were riding shaggy young horses, playing the discus or ball-games, scattered and fled. Those who were swimming splashed towards their clothes, or fled naked and wet. A boy was drowned, kicked in the face by a hurrying comrade. All scampered away, eager only to feel the safety of home, even if that home was no more than a filthy hole in a tenement from which the bailiff was threatening ejectment. But a few thieves, social outcasts whom no sign of wrath in heaven or earth could scare, watched the flight with satisfaction and rummaged among the discarded baskets and holiday-huts. Their fellows among the theatre-crowd were busy snatching purses and bearing off the goods of the overturned stalls.

To find the Senate fled was a blow of the first magnitude to the conspirators. They had not been able to concert any measures beyond the plan for slaying Cæsar, and had taken for granted that they would turn at once to the Senate and justify themselves. Brutus had his speech ready; he was to announce that Cæsar's death ended the dictatorship and that the constitution once more became paramount. Now the conspirators looked at the empty disordered hall, and stood afraid. Trebonius entered, to admit that Marcus Antonius had escaped; but what had been the use of holding him when the Senate had run away?

Decimus Brutus left as soon as he saw Cæsar bleeding on the floor. He had placed a body of trained gladiators in a

small side-portico, under pretence of assisting with a fencing-display at the Theatre; these men were to form up at the hall-door and keep order until the Senate had made its first resolutions. A clash of arms declared that he had brought the troupe into position; but what use were they now? The conspirators were lost between exultation in the success of the deed and fear at the solitude in which it had isolated them. They pressed round the main actors, Brutus, Cassius, Trebonius, and Casca, waiting for a lead. Brutus and Cassius spoke a few uncertain words aside, waiting for the return of Decimus.

"We can't remain here," said Brutus, at last, addressing the huddled group. "We must go back into Rome and find somewhere else to call the Senate, and it's of course imperative that meanwhile we don't separate. I suggest that we march with the guard of Decimus and occupy the Capitol."

His words brought life back into the men. They applauded loudly, pleased at the noise. They mustn't separate; anything but that. Eagerly they moved out of the Curia, averting their eyes from the spot under the statue-base where a broken body lay. Someone hoisted a Phrygian liberty-cap on the end of a pike, and they marched out into the street, chanting, calling on the people to rise and be free. But dishevelled, waving blood-stained daggers, shouting incomprehensible words, they completed the demoralisation of the people who yet remained. The crowd, still streaming out of the Theatre and the neighbouring pleasure-gardens, were appalled at the sight. Knocking one another down, they scrambled to avoid the slayers, terrified of being contaminated by the blood-guilt, aware only that there was no longer any security in the world.

AMOS was lying under a myrtle-bush in the portico, which was a sin. For though there was nothing wrong in enjoying the shade of a myrtle, it was a different matter when myrtle was chosen because it was the tree of Venus. The leaf was the shame-patch of the goddess, her palm of secrecy and what the palm hid. Amos, abandoned to a sense of sin, wondered if a girl would come and rest on the other side of the leaves, so that he could roll over and take her in his arms by miracu-

lous chance. But she would scream, and that would be unpleasant. Amos was confounded by the dilemma of the masculine day-dream: a girl supernaturally chaste and infinitely lascivious. Girls, in point of fact, were either solely chaste, so that one couldn't get them, or solely lascivious, so that everyone but oneself got them: which wasn't satisfactory.

Then he remembered Karni and relented. But how was he ever to visit Karni again? Why didn't she live in less redoubtable surroundings, not among Ethiopians who ate money.

Then he heard the sounds of men running, scuffling, crying. What was wrong? He feared that they were chasing after him, and shrank back under the bush, into the many-patched Venus; but what had he done? Nothing that anyone knew about. What was only in his head wasn't a crime. He lay quaking for a long while, inventing excuses, and then crept out. There was no one to be seen along the wide garden. Various articles strewn about suggested flight; but what enemy could be marching on Rome? Amos saw a fine yellow-brown cloak, and coveted it violently. It was exactly the shade of his shoes. If he owned the cloak, he needn't be ashamed of his shoes any more. He approached the cloak and decided to take the risk. As soon as he saw anyone, he would call "Who's lost a cloak?" Then they couldn't accuse him of stealing it. He took it up, fondled it, and tip-toed towards the gate.

There was no one in the street. The last thieves had retreated, and Amos couldn't see the drunken man lying under the upturned stall, or the young pair of lovers who, too dazed to run, were embracing with feverish haste in an abandoned litter.

He crept out through the gate. All the buildings seemed twice as big. Was it the end of the world? Had everyone died but Amos? Had the Messiah come and led away the armies of the faithful and the damned? The thought made the flesh of Amos stiffen with dread. What terrible game was Yahwe playing with him? Poor Amos, pity the lad. He wasn't either a sinner or a saint; he was simply lost, not wanted, unjudged. Why should he be left when the rest of

mankind were twitched off the earth into the pits of air, leaving him only a brown-yellow cloak?

He slunk up to the door of the Curia and gazed in. A fascination descended on him. He wanted to see into this hall of silence where the great of the earth had congregated. He felt that the secret must be there. Had Cæsar too been carried off. Surely not. Would Yahwe crush Cæsar into the aery void and leave Amos behind? Slowly, unwillingly, the horrified Amos crept into the hall, up the front-steps and across the vestibule where incense was still smoking. He listened to the rattling thud of his footsteps, alone in the huge world of death.

Then he passed over the main threshold and looked in. At first he saw only the long hall. Then he saw the bundle lying under the high statue. A man bleeding from a score of gashes, a lean, wiry body, contorted in death. The face was turned towards the door, and Amos saw that it was free from wounds, and there was a light of great happiness resting on the face. Amos shivered. He couldn't understand. The sight was too strange. Who was the man?

Then Amos knew it was Cæsar, and his knees knocked together, and he prayed for a moment of utter agony, and he fled out of the hall, wailing through his chattering teeth.

THE news of some disaster was speeding through the city before the first fugitive had reached the Carmental Gate. As in the field, there was a chaotic drift of dismay, and then the explanation.

"Cæsar is dead."

Like a virus entering the blood through a tiny puncture and rushing through the rest of the body, the words penetrated to every area of the city. The money-changer overturned his table and then bent quavering to pick up the coins. The banker paused in mid-entry, licked his dry lips, looked at the line of figures, and closed the book. The girls in the brothels threw back their heads and howled. The men at the armourers dropped their hammers and seized the swords. The plumber left the lead-piping that he was fixing at an illegally low level, and ran, leaving the water to gush out and fill the cellars of the neighbourhood, drowning cats

and spoiling wine. "Bite me," said the drunken girl, insufficiently kissed. The slaves crouched in corners, fearful of being blamed for the cloud of guilt that had suddenly suffused the world. Shutters were clanking in the palsied hands of shopkeepers. Stalls collapsed. A child was pushed down a sewer-hole, and the mother beat her head on the pavement, licking at the blood that rolled down her cheeks. Thieves attacked a silversmith's shop and were thrashed away. A porter scattered a barrow-full of pottery across the road. A girl pushed her inquisitive mother-in-law out of the lofty tenement-window. A cripple was trodden to death. The temples were filled with lowly-moaning votarists.

Elsewhere was silence. In the slums and fine houses, the taverns and baths, the workshops and factories, the stores and markets, the dockyards and squares, the colonnades and offices, the word was passed round, and everyone paused. The people saw in Cæsar's death the end of all their hopes; the landlord-class felt any pleasure overmastered by the fear of reprisals. All was silent, seeking to discover how Cæsar's death would affect their lives.

When the conspirators entered the Gate, the citizens fled before them, diving into cook-shops or lodging-houses, workshops or private lobbies. House-owners looked darkly on their cowering slaves, and the fear on the faces of the slaves looked like a menace, and the owners quailed. For the great fear of a slave-owning community is murder in the darkness. But the slaves were more disturbed than their masters; they were drawn for a moment out of their fatalistic submission and felt, they knew not how, that they had lost a benefactor. That emotion was conscious among the proletarians and veterans. Uncertain, scared of the unknown forces that had stricken Cæsar, the people were yet murmuring their wrath together.

The conspirators marched on, shouting reassurances whenever they met a group of citizens who had not yet been able to find refuge; but the universal fear reacted on their spirits, and it was with difficulty they maintained the demeanour of liberators. Brutus marched at the head, still gripped by a feeling of illusion. The unexpected disappearance of the senators had not depressed or frightened him; it had robbed

him of all emotion, stranding him on a blankness. He found it difficult even to focus his eyes.

But Cassius, for all his anxiety, was happy. Caesar was dead, and there was a need of action. The other conspirators drifted between a vague oppression and a hovering ecstasy. The flight of the citizens conveyed to them an effect of invincibility, but also made them look doubtfully on all dim lane-entrances and temple-doors, fearful of an onset of yelling veterans.

But the veterans were too disconcerted and dispersed. They swore, and roared for more wine, and kicked the slave-waiters, and again swore thundering oaths; but what course to take they had no notion.

THE cobwebs were never taken from the ceiling till they fell on the customers' heads in the tavern where Gallus was drinking. Not that he cared. There were fouller cobwebs in his mind, blotching his skin with streaks of heat. He hadn't been to bed all night. When the last guest was leaving Dolabella's house, he could stay no longer, and, making excuses to Nicias, he had turned aside for the first public-house, where some wafers of light came through the shutters. It had been a half-lupanar, but he was in no mood for caresses. He sat drinking; and the insults that he bestowed on troublesome girls, the sight of maudlin staggering couples, the loud mirthless laughter, rasped his nerves to an exquisite torment. He drank and brooded on other loveless beds. At least these women pretended nothing. Each set a price-ticket over her particular alcove and abided by that evaluation of her flesh. "Phyllis, nice to nice fellows." These women didn't deliver soliloquies in verse that mocked and pleaded and teased the spirit—the spirit that stood aside from the body's degradation, recording, re-defining, seeking to make self-knowledge safe in its structure of expression.

What was the use of poetry unless it gave one something to grasp in the turmoil of experience, an image of desire which released by its finality of possessive utterance?

No use at all.

Towards morning he slept a while, uneasily, his head on a footstool; and a girl named Flaviola, a little over thirty,

stirred from the cramping position in which she lay beside a hulking Thracian. And she watched the man who had refused her earlier in the night and who did nothing but drink. She stole away, and found a cloth and some watered vinegar, and bathed the forehead of Gallus, and kissed him once, a butterfly-kiss, on the mouth; and he knew nothing of what she had done, but groaned in his sleep; and the girl crept back to her straw-mattress and cried quietly, afraid of disturbing the others, doubling up her little fist and biting it. And Gallus groaned in his sleep at the hard hearts of women.

At dawn he struggled up, wrote the name of Cytheris with obscene comments on the wall, ate some pulse-porridge, and went to wander in the streets. He loathed drinking alone, but drank from tavern to tavern, watching his small stock of money dwindle. Why was he drinking? He detested Cytheris and would die rather than touch her, but he wanted the chance of refusing her, and that chance would never be his. So why ask questions? He drank because he had started drinking and couldn't stop.

He stumbled out of the tavern in the Oil Market and made his way towards the Capitol. Suddenly there were cries of alarm and a press of elbowing men and women; but the scene fitted in so well with his emotions that he did not notice its unusualness. He pushed on and came out the other side of the fugitives. There he stood swaying, heartened by the effort needed to push through. It was natural he should be going the opposite way to everyone else.

Then, along the street that led from the wall, a band of men came marching, headed by a detachment of gladiators. They were calling out, singing, brandishing blood-stained daggers. Gallus stared. Then he saw the Phrygian cap, and he joined in the cheering. That was the cap of freedom. The world had been freed. Beyond that he realised nothing, but what else was worth realising? The conspirators stared back at their solitary adherent, more abashed by his response than by the terror of all the others. That everyone should flee before them was in its way a stirring compliment; that one bedraggled man should stand in the gutterway cheering and clapping his hands reduced their demonstration to a

tawdry futility. They walked faster, some dropping into silence, others shouting louder to drown the noise that Gallus was making.

They passed, and Gallus stood looking after them, stopping his applause with open mouth and lifted hands. What was the meaning of it all? He heard footsteps behind him, and turned with the intention of inquiring; but as he turned, a club came down on his head and the world darkened, bleeding with flame-drops and wheeling into deeper darkness. Gallus fell to the pavement.

"Pull him down that lane there," said the veteran who had clubbed him. "That'll teach him to go cheering a pack of bloody murderers."

Down the street towards the Gate Amos ran. Tears were in his eyes, and he still thought himself alone in the world, not noticing the people who were peeping cautiously out after the conspirators. An awful thought had come to him. 15th March: the grand feast of the Passover, the 15th Nissen, the day of the first full moon of the year, the day of the eating of the Paschal Lamb.

The doorposts and lintels were smeared with blood, and the world was redeemed by the meat of the Lamb. Deep had the world eaten of Caesar, bowels and all, and the seasoning was the unleavened bread and the herbs of bitterness.

It was the end of everything. Marcus Antonius glowered at his two brothers. Fulvia sat on her chair, her hands loose on her lap. "So we ran away like cowards," Antonius repeated. "Miserable stinking cowards. Come and tread on us."

He reached out for the wine-flagon. Fulvia took it quickly away. He caught her wrist, his mouth opening savagely. "Give me that wine." He twisted her wrist, but she refused to let go. The flagon turned slowly upside-down, spilling on the floor. She showed nothing of the pain she felt. Antonius dropped her wrist.

"Another flask," he shouted, and a slave brought the wine. Fulvia ignored him this time as he poured out a goblet-full.

She sat with her hands loose in her lap as before, taking no notice of the badly smarting wrist.

"Wait and see," said Gaius, with a side-leer at Fulvia.

"We may be able to come to terms with them yet."

"What use is that?" Marcus turned on him with twitching brows and nose. "That won't bring Cæsar back to life. I'll never forget that I ran away while they hacked him down. What chance did he have?"

"None," said Fulvia, calmly. "But it's your chance now."

Marcus Antonius swung round to reply. He hesitated, looked at her wrist, and raised it to his lips. "Don't come between me and my flagon when I need a drink," he said, humbly. "But you're wrong. I'm no Cæsar." He rolled over on the couch and laid his head on her lap. "I loved him, though I had my grievances. I'm nothing now he's gone."

Fulvia, stroking his hair, playfully nipped his ear. He stopped speaking. Was there truth in what she had said? But he couldn't think; he was tormented by the certainty that he could have saved Cæsar. If he'd knocked Trebonius down and rushed to the rescue, others would have rallied. Cæsar had already been stabbed, but it needed more than a few stabs to kill such a man; he would have recovered. But they had all closed round; it would have been too late, surely too late.

"I am no Cæsar," he repeated, through his teeth; and suddenly, out of the stirring veils of his mind, there came a clear thought. What if he was named as Cæsar's adopted son in the will? He fought the thought down, but it recurred with hope. He knew that Cæsar had anxiously canvassed the question of an adoption, and once there had been a hint . . .

He leaped up and strode about the room. Ah, if that hope were true. If he had the name, he could carry on; he knew it. Somebody must carry on. "More wine please."

"Let's die so wet that we'll put out the funeral-pyre," said Gaius.

"We shan't die easily," said Marcus, and left the room.

"Where's he gone?" asked Gaius, holding a crystal cup to the light. "I drink to the Shade of Cæsar."

"He's gone to send out men and see what veterans can be collected," said Lucius, rising. "You one-eyed sot. And I'm going to do the same."

"Well, that's no reason why we shouldn't have a drink," said Gaius, stretching out his cup towards Fulvia and bowing over it. He looked round to make sure no one was listening. "Eh, Fulvia, when are you taking me to bed?"

She rose, struck the wine-cup from his hand, and walked without haste from the room. Gaius sneered after her; then noticing the broken cup and the wine spilt on the floor, he approached the doorway to summon a slave and have the mess removed. Pisidice, a slave-girl of Fulvia's, was passing.

"Come in here," said Gaius. The girl, a slight thing with reddish hair and snub nose, obeyed; he pointed to the carpet. "Clean it up."

She pouted. "I'm not used to such work."

"You're a slave," said Gaius, pulling her hair. "Get down to it." Then, as she bent, he pushed her over, stained her dress in the red wine and floor-dust, and held her there, taking care not to wet his own tunic.

The girl did not struggle or cry out, but watched him with eyes of hatred till he had finished with her.

"Now, go back and tell your mistress that I don't like having my wine spilt."

She rose and hurried out without a word.

DIPHYLUS, the slave who had been manumitted before Brutus that morning was wringing his hands as he paced up and down the lane. What would happen to him? All his slave-savings had been used up in buying his freedom, paying the tax, and negotiating for a job as agent in the emigration-office. This office was an informal organisation, under the charge of Cæsar's secretary, Balbus. Now it would disappear, and what would happen to Diphylus?

He realised the huge indifference of the world and longed for the snug tasks of slavery again. Who wanted freedom to starve? It was his wife's fault, for she taunted him so much with her status of freed-woman that he had bought his freedom prematurely. He had been a fool; afraid that the child his wife had conceived would be claimed as a slave. O

why had he done it? Even if the doles were continued and he managed to get on the list, where was the rent to come from? And his wife wanted new clothes and medicine. Cæsar's death had ruined everything. O for slavery again.

Diphylus paced up and down the lane, unable to climb the side-stairs of the tenement-block and face his wife.

How would Rome take the news? That was the question. Cicero had been among the fleeing senators, and he now cursed his timidity. He had seen the sight he longed to see, and had fled from it. But he had been carried away in the crush; the contagion of panic had been irresistible. Could he have helped by staying? Cæsar was dead. Cicero had seen enough to know that. And Brutus and Cassius were the Liberators. But how would Rome take the news?

He had bidden the litter-men carry him back to his house on the Palatine, though he hated the house. All his houses and villas were hateful, stained with the ghostly presence of the dead Tullia; and while in Rome, he dreaded that he would meet his young second-wife, Publilia. He had divorced her, but couldn't complete the arrangements on account of the money-shortage. Publilia had been his ward; she was very rich; and he had married her after divorcing Terentia some eighteen months ago. Terentia and he had been married thirty years; and though they jarred at times the divorce had come as a surprise to the world and the divorced pair themselves. It was all Terentia's fault, Cicero decided; she became mean about money; she was rude; she let herself be cheated by that accountant of hers; she was a fool; her voice was intolerable; she jeered at him in bed; she was old; her breath smelt; she shouldn't have worn that flighty embroidered dress; she talked too much—she was impossible, and yet he had been used to her. It had been more than madness to take Publilia to wife.

He sweated as he thought of the marriage-night. The little skimpy girl, barely past puberty, and himself suddenly aware of rheumatic joints and grey hairs and dried skin. He patted her and told her to go to sleep, and while she slept he had been unable to restrain himself. Was she not

his wife? He had taken her in the dark while she wept through her hair; and then she had clung to him, and he had felt fear soak through his bones. How could he mate with one so young? Her crude vitality would absorb him, break him down as a dog crunches a soft bone for its marrow. She whispered and clumsily called him love-names, and wanted to be kissed. He had sweated with misery in the darkness, and he sweated now that he thought of her. She was a siren-spasm, a moon-dream sucking out a man's life, a wicked little brat. Her hot, young mouth had moved over his mouth pleadingly. Surely Terentia had not kissed him like that even thirty years ago?

Then Tullia had died, and her death had seemed like a punishment. He had married a girl far younger than his daughter, and his daughter died; and Publilia had wanted to kiss him instead of mourning the dead.

Cicero groaned as the litter began to ascend the steep road leading up from the Forum beside the Temple of the Twin Brothers. He had peeped out as they passed through the Forum. All the shops were shut. What would the day bring forth? The incline forced his head against the litter-back. He shouted to the men to go faster. They plodded on, the muscles of thigh and calf torn by the strain, the back aching. How they would have liked to trundle the fat beast down the road in a barrel full of nails. At last the top was reached, and a few easy steps brought the litter to Cicero's door. He emerged hastily and went straight into the house; but without waiting to change his clothes or to rest he climbed the stairs and walked out on to the roof.

Rome lay below, a strangely quiet Rome. Never had he seen it so quiet. He stood watching in fear. Then he saw the band ascending the Capitol stairs. Surely it could not be insurgents? It must be the Liberators. How well they had arranged everything. He felt happier. Something was happening at last. The dictatorship was ended. Brutus was the greatest Roman who had ever been.

But as the certainty of success grasped Cicero, he felt his eyes drawn to the house next door. There, on the roof, he had stood nineteen years ago at the side of Clodia and looked down on a Rome conquered by his consulship. He had

beaten the anarchist Catilina; and then Cæsar had spoiled everything, and Clodius had organised the workers and ruled the city with riot till he was killed on the Appian Way. The house further down had belonged to Clodius, and he had leased it some ten years past to young Marcus Cælius, who had been such a staunch friend to Cicero. Then, five years ago, Cælius had transformed himself into a mob-agitator and behaved like Clodius, till he was cut down in the south by some Spanish cavalry. There was no principle anywhere. Dolabella had been Cicero's son-in-law, and then he had stepped into the place vacated by Cælius, agitating for communistic measures.

Where would it all stop?

The men on the Capitol were barricading the passages. Some of them were armoured, and Cicero could see the glitter of the weapons. He felt strong again. It was not Brutus after all who was the leader of the day. Who had kept alive the thought of a free State in the hearts of men but Cicero himself? Cicero was the force that had struck Cæsar down and that now occupied the Capitol where the God of the Romans dwelt.

Then Cicero saw a girl coming along the street below. He thought for a moment of agony that she was Publilia. He grasped the railings. Would the slaves remember their instructions to say he was out, to refuse entrance at all costs? But it wasn't Publilia. No need to fear that whining little voice, that hot child-mouth.

"It would not be disadvantageous to Your Majesty," said the lean, withered man clad in white linen, and shod with shoes of the finest woven-papyrus, "to have a Temple of the Holy Mother at Rome." He folded the hands, in which he held a short branch of sea-wormwood, and looked at Cleopatra with bright, small eyes.

Cleopatra knew what he meant. She would be decidedly pleased at any Egyptianising of Rome, and the priesthood of Isis would be valuable spies and agents when they had established their influence.

"I have no doubt Cæsar will consider having the Senatorial Decree against our worship withdrawn," she said, negligently.

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"You can, of course, count on my aid, such as it is. Caesar has no prejudices in these matters, and the decree was passed before he took control. Why don't you go to him direct?"

The priest lowered his eyes and answered mildly, "Are you not the Queen of Egypt, the blessed patroness of Isis? Are you not of divine blood, her starry sister?"

Cleopatra signed to him to cease, and smiled regally. "I know my names of power. I am Egypt. But I think you can go back to Puteoli with an easy heart. However, you will first call on Caesar, and you will not say I sent you. By the end of the week I think you will have your decree."

There was a clamour at the door, and she looked up with angry surprise. Sara stood there, throwing aside the door-slave. "Your Majesty," he called. "I must speak."

Furious, she beckoned him to approach, determined to make him pay dearly if he had made a wanton display of disobedience before the High Priest of Isis from Puteoli. But he advanced into the room, breathing heavily, and sank on his knee before her, twisting a felt cap.

"Caesar is dead."

Cleopatra shuddered. Her eyes opened wide and she stared dumbly at Sara, noting every detail of his coarse face, fighting to master her confused emotions. Her heart pounded; she felt Caesar's kiss between her offered breasts; then she spoke clearly and calmly.

"Who killed him?" She knew he had been killed; no sickness could have ended him.

"He was murdered—cut down in the Curia by a crowd of senators."

"Who has taken charge?"

"No one. The murderers have shut themselves up in the Capitol."

Cleopatra sprang up. Why wasn't she a man to do a man's work at such a moment? What use of words? There was only one thing to do—corner the rats and stamp on them. The priest stood aside, striving to relate the news to his project; but Cleopatra felt an overpowering disdain of herself, of the earth.

"Caesar's friends—have they not avenged him yet?"

"I hear that most of the murderers were his friends. The consul has fled."

Cleopatra waved him away wearily. "Go and find more details. The names. Learn the names."

Her head was burning. She signed to the men to leave her. They bowed and backed out of the room; but they had already passed out of her mind. It was all impossible. Cæsar, that great soldier, that gracious and wise man: he wasn't dead. A word would bring him back to life. Come to me, Cæsar. None but Cleopatra had seen the depth and fineness of him; she was now convinced of that; and she had never been able to communicate her knowledge. She had lain in his arms, but said nothing. Come back for one word, Cæsar. They had smiled at each other, but words had failed. There lay the greatest loss of all, the word that had never been spoken. If she had but seen him die, she would have called to him that word of royal courage to farewell him into the darkness—the word that would have broken the madness of the ingratitude on which his effort had cruelly spent itself.

Cæsar, let me speak to you. I have said nothing, though my body was yours.

Her scheming for the child, her ambitions, her hope to save Egypt: how trivial it all seemed. She bowed her head and walked to the end of the room where stood a little shrine to Isis. The image of the moon-faced goddess looked out of a sandalwood shrine; and in her hands she held the key of immortality, the sign of mated loins. Cleopatra sank on to a cushion placed before the shrine. She tore open her brocaded dress and bared her breasts and prayed, not to the goddess, in whom she had no belief, but to her own body, calling it Isis.

"Holy Mother, I have lost him, my king of men, and never till this moment did I hold him wholly mine. He has died lonely and kept his secret, and lonely I will die, for I have lost my man. Cæsar, Cæsar, hear me. I don't care whether you adopt my son. I don't care if Rome swallows Egypt. I only want you to live. I want you to fight and conquer me. My body has enclosed you, conceiving a son of your seed. I offer you my body again, Cæsar. Live in me as the hero lives in his race. I cannot bear to leave you so lonely."

She laid her head against a globe of crystal that rested on an ebony table. It quieted her. She felt her life, her burning blood, flow into the cool crystal, tainting it with the harried life of humankind. In the crystal her life ebbed away, resolving to a smudge of heat, a phantasmal clot of blood. In the womb of the crystal her life was reforming, building itself up again, putting forth unfamiliar hands and feet, reaching out to the moment of its emergence.

Cleopatra fell forward and lay with her face on the floor, sobbing. Her maids peeped round the pillars, but did not dare disturb her. They had never seen her cry before.

THE conspirators had preferred to march round and climb by the Capitoline Road rather than venture on the nearer steps outside the wall. For those steps were narrow, and could have been easily barred against them; and it would seem as if they were slinking in. No, they must march round through the city, even if it meant passing under the Tarpeian Cliff, whence traitors were flung. But no one barred the approaches, and soon all the top landings were guarded by their freedmen and gladiators.

The conspirators felt masters indeed, holding the Citadel of Rome; but they were surrounded by too many evidences of Cæsar's power to feel quite comfortable. There rose his chariot opposite the main temple; among the Seven Kings stood his statue. Some of the bolder conspirators had already considered throwing down the statue; but the others dissuaded them, disliking any further gesture till some more definite basis was established. The clerks in the Public Offices below had joined the general flight; but those in the Mint, the Temple of Iuno Moneta on the northern crest, were caught by the arrival of the conspirators. They bolted the strong doors, and peered through window-slits, wondering if they would be starved out. The sound of mallets and clattering dies had abruptly ceased; and the master-of-the-mint was pacing the floor, ordering the new coins to be shovelled into boxes and stowed in the secret cellars. A damned nuisance! doubtless the new design that he was so proud of would now be cancelled. The conservatives would be sure to want to stop the issue of all coins with

Cæsar's head; for never before had a Roman coin borne a ruler's head; such a design was blasphemous, usurping a god's privilege.

But the conspirators felt more relieved as they saw the barricades of furniture, cases, trees, bits of sacred pottery dragged up from the well-pits sunk in the stone—for even the broken jars of the temple-service might not be thrown away. Safety was assured. But that emotion of safety involved a deadening sense of being caged, besieged by the rest of mankind on a barren crag where a god of stone might live happily but a man would wither; and the conspirators were not gods, though they had arrogated to themselves the work of judgment.

They crowded together in the front portion of the main temple, while behind them rose the shrine of the Three, lately repaired after a fire: the Three—Father, Wife, and Daughter, begotten not by fleshy conjunction but in the mind, crawling from the Father's ear, the pure babe of the Word. A few cornered worshippers and sightseers shrunk into the shadows.

Brutus had lost both rapture and blankness. A ghastly argument was going on in his head. An unknown reasoner had cried, "Murder." Brutus retorted that he had defended freedom by the force necessary to quell them that lived by force; but the unknown had answered, "Is a slave then justified when he kills his master?" A slave was not a free man. "But that is your very protest. You say that Cæsar enslaved you. Unless that is true, you killed without justification. Then any enslaved human being is justified in slaying the master who keeps him enslaved by right of force alone." But the slave had been bought. "On what does the bargain rest? Ultimately on force alone. Has the slave's will assented? Is not the slave human?"

White-faced, Brutus tried to compel his brain to stop working, to drive away the gnat-thoughts that stung him intolerably. Cassius, noting this preoccupation, took charge of the meeting and spoke. It was necessary to summon all the senators of good-will for a private council; pressure must be brought to bear on Antonius for a session of the Senate; if the Liberators could rely on a majority at the session, all

would yet be well and the counter-revolution consummated as smoothly as had first been intended.

All agreed to this; and the numerous slaves and freedmen who had accompanied their masters were given messages to all senators except those promoted to the rank by Cæsar during the last few years. As the conspirators counted out the number of men to be summoned, they were surprised to find how strong their party would be. Each man glanced over the list, finding names that had been omitted, excitedly giving fresh instructions.

Brutus felt his thoughts swirling in his head. A maelstrom of ideas and images, and himself swept in the midst. O for the arms of Porcia. His head was hollow, a pipe down which the medley hurtled with the croaking swirl of water escaping down a drain. All the formulæ, which he had used that morning as prætor in dealing with property matters, had been based on the principle of ownership as the result of war-capture, of force. All service that didn't proceed from a total assent of the will was enslavement; but what man could know his will in its totality? All were slaves, knuckling under to force. All had the right to kill; no one had it. He reached out his hand towards the roof of the Capitoline Temple, wanting to drag it down upon them all, upon the divine Three in the holy cells, upon tyrant and slave, upon the world where man was both tyrant and slave in the drama of his unrealised life.

Down from the Capitol by the less observed paths went the freedmen and slaves, roused by this adventure in which they had abruptly found themselves. The death of Cæsar meant no greater freedom for them—indeed, meant less, since it ended Cæsar's patronage of the submerged classes; but they were thrilled. Vicariously they enjoyed the sense of throwing off bonds, of reaching the clear sunlight at the end of effort's dark, convulsive tunnel. They were ready to die for the Liberators.

The senators, fidgeting in their homes, received the messages and were surprised into optimism. Cæsar was dead. The populace had not risen. The sun was still in the sky. The slayers, a strong band, had seized the Capitol.

All would yet be well. No longer would a dictator interfere with business profits and cramp the careers of the sons of the upper class. Once more the old prizes would be there for competition, provincial governments and the spoils of petty wars and the manifold perquisites of the Republican official. The wrestle for political control of the law courts would begin again; that meant outlays of money, a good return for favours. Business would be unfettered in the provinces; there would be no more prying into rates charged, no more championing of the feckless debtor class, no more strict supervision of the tax collectors.

The senators rubbed their hands and told their wives that the world was once more safe for freedom. A dangerous period, a gravely dangerous period, in fact a crisis, had been passed. Probably it was an event to be celebrated with presents—a little jewelry. You sweet thing, fancy boring a hole in the lobe of your ear where a pearl may hang and tell the world how rich I am. The senators pinched their wives' ears and dreamed of easy credit.

VOICES challenging. A cursing reply.

Marcus Antonius hurried towards the hall and found his small bodyguard of veterans holding someone up.

"Take a good look," said the new-comer. "Don't you recognise me, you unwashed pismires?"

It was Marcus Lepidus. Antonius went to the door and grasped Lepidus by both his hands. "I'm glad to see you."

"Where are the others?"

"I don't know. Killed, or locked up for safety in their money-chests. But it's good to see you."

Lepidus looked round, his horse-face lengthening. "So there's only you and I left," he said slowly. Then he raised his right arm aloft. "Farewell, Cæsar. I pray that a dead man's a blind man. I wouldn't like you to see the world at this moment." He surveyed the score of veterans. "Have you learned from your betters, you rascallions? Don't you see that loyalty's out of fashion? It died when men took to shaving their faces to look like women's bottoms."

The men shifted and grinned. "We'll shave some of them a little closer than's comfortable," said one of them.

"Who? Your betters or your wives?" guffawed Lepidus; then Antonius took him by the arm and led him into the room beyond. "The world's a stench," Lepidus went on. "I found my wife being hugged the wrong way round by one of the guests last night, and today Cæsar's been slit. I forgave my wife, but a man's good-nature won't last for ever. What do you think about it?"

"I think you and I are shouldered out of the world," said Antonius. "But something may happen."

Lepidus showed his large teeth. "I'll wait. I've had a start already. I belted my wife before I came out. Since she's the sister of Marcus Brutus, I felt it was first blow to us. You'd be surprised how that woman loves me."

Antonius said nothing. He knew that the bluff talk of Lepidus was invented only to fill time in, to deafen the questions of the situation. What could the pair of them do? Drink and talk big. The conspirators had everything favourable; they had destroyed their opponents with a blow; the powerful Cæsarian party had dissolved in less than an hour; there was no resistance except among the unorganised proletariat, and Antonius had the soldier's contempt for a mob. Unless the conspirators bungled things incredibly, they would control the State by the morrow; they would enrol a militia of upper-class youths; and the discontent of the workers and veterans, diffused and spasmodic, would end with a few puerile brawls. There was nothing to stop the conservative reaction.

"Something to drink?"

"Blood of the grape," grumbled Lepidus. "Can't you see I'm drunk already, you fool? Get some wine at once."

THE senators began to arrive on the Capitol, almost as brisk in responding to the call as they had been in running from the Curia. The shock had passed. Cæsar was but a man after all, and he had no successor. No more was needed than a strong hand over the mob that would naturally be restive for a day or two; then everything would revert to normal. Cæsar was only an episode. A man, dropt in mid-ocean, disturbed the waters, but after a while his muscles failed and the waters closed over his head, and ocean remained. The

State remained and Cæsar was gone. He already seemed merely a name, like Marius and Sulla, like any of the passing disruptors of the system. The lightning-flash is awful while it lasts, but it doesn't last long. Cæsar had lightened, and vanished, leaving the memory of stark light that revealed queer cavities and distortions, unguessed scurrying forms, a sudden intolerable earth.

Now the authority of the upper families, the power of the landlords, was to reassert itself; the sacredness of property, even if gained by usury or oppression; the supremacy of money and birth; law and order.

The air on the Capitol exhilarated. The Sky-god was at one's elbow as one gazed down on Rome, on all the roofs, the lazily curling smoke-wreaths. Rome's destiny was easily read from the height. Cleave to the law, do your duty, and strike down the transgressor, be he father or brother or son. The senators chatted, impressed by the greatness of the fate with which they were honoured. The face of Cæsar receded more and more.

Cassius called the gathering to some state of order. A decision must be reached. An official meeting of the Senate must be called. Quickly the routine of Republican government must be restored: all depended on that. But Antonius, now the highest officer of the State, had the prerogative of calling the meeting.

Cicero rose. He had listened with scorn to the vague and dilatory optimism of the speakers. Certainly there should be a meeting of the Senate. Why should not Brutus, the second official of the State, and a fully qualified curule magistrate, formally declare the present gathering a sufficient session? They were on duly consecrated ground. Let the magistrates there present take instant control of the State. Let all others be given twenty-four hours to signify their readiness to swear fealty to the constitution. After that, let them be deposed by an Ultimate Decree. Let messengers be despatched at once to all the more respectable municipalities asking for money and volunteers. Let a corps of citizen-defenders be founded at Rome before nightfall. If this course was followed, there would be a likelihood of success. Every other course was more than doubtful.

Silence spread. The men knew that Cicero had spoken the truth, and yet some vague interdiction prevented them from acclaiming his advice and vigorously following it out. All looked towards Brutus. If he took the responsibility, they would agree, but otherwise they dare not.

Brutus felt the weight of all their minds pressing upon him. He was tired; he wanted to get back to Porcia. He felt in that distracted condition when one is trying to remember a word that half-presents itself and then flutters away, so that all concentration is lost in a search which the intelligence admits irrelevant. All he could see was that Cicero was asking for unconstitutional action whereas the Liberators had combined to destroy Cæsar for infringing the constitution.

"Antonius has not yet been approached," he said heavily. "I see no reason for extreme measures till we know his attitude."

Cassius tore at his finger-nails. He had realised the force of Cicero's appeal. But why did the meeting turn to Brutus as if wisdom remained with him? Why not to Cassius? He would then have supported Cicero. But when they asked him after consulting Brutus, he refused to express his belief. They had chosen. Let their vote be for Brutus, since they would finally vote for his staid weakness whatever Cassius urged. They would merely temporise a little longer, become a little more muddled, drift into further doubts.

"What Brutus has said is true," he remarked, savagely, and turned aside.

Cicero also felt that he could say no more. He had spoken. He had put the issues plainly.

Decimus Brutus was talking. He bade the gathering see how smoothly everything had gone so far. What was there to fear? Antonius, though no pure-hearted constitutionalist, was yet no fool. He would never stand out against the whole governing class, to which he himself belonged. The Empire must be ruled, and the last word was with the Senate. Consider the situation objectively. The men now assembled could simply destroy the State by walking out of Rome. The whole machinery of government would collapse. Their opponents knew that. Cæsar had known it when he sought to conciliate the remnants of the old senatorial class and enlist

them as workers under his direction; what had been true then was doubly true now, for all Cæsar's original lieutenants were in the dissenting body. Let a deputation be sent to sound Antonius.

The senators were cheered to hear a soldier giving such eminently peaceful advice.

Cicero saw that any attempt to break their mood was vain. Instead of arguing he watched the sun, the setting of Cæsar's empire. The sun was nearing the Ianiculan crests, turning the hills into blue flatness while picking out a villa-roof here and there. As the dusk grew, the statues that crowded the Capitol seemed coming to life. The men of stone swayed in the wind, growing taller and slightly menacing. All the past of Rome was historied in those stones, and they stretched and rustled about the men of the living hour. Stealthily Rome's tremendous past engulfed the moment of choice; the heroes and lawgivers came to life under the unchanging stars and spoke a word greater than all the wandering speeches of those who debated the present fate. Shiveringly Cicero remembered that Cæsar, the dead man, was standing among this dynasty of stone. The whispering of the night was Cæsar taking counsel with the spirits of the race.

Below, a few torch-lights were sparkling in the mauve dusk. A faint life was returning to the expectant city.

SOMEWHERE near a dog with a broken leg was yelping. Gallus stirred. His face was half lying in a puddle, but not under the water, or he would have drowned. Struggling up, he saw the first stars quivering on the pallid dusk. There was a dull pulse of pain in his head; he was filthy, and bewildered with shock and the dregs of wine; but out of the dusk of his mind there winged a thought. He must find Cytheris. Dimly he recalled the march he had seen. Something was afoot. He didn't know if he meant to save Cytheris or be saved by her, but only knew that he must find her; and in his vague fixation it seemed that she would be awaiting him. It was to a tryst he was going.

But where did she live? His mind blankly put aside all consideration of inquiring at Dolabella's house. He refused to connect her with the place, but the effort of banishing it

dredged up a remark that she had made while reclining on Dolabella's couch. Someone had talked of gems, and she had shown a bracelet delicately set with split jewels to look like flowers. She had mentioned some jeweller as the maker. Who was it?

Without further thought Gallus picked himself up, rubbed aimlessly at the mud on his dinner-tunic, and set off in the direction of the Forum. Beyond that lay the Sacred Way where most of the jewellers were found. Perhaps he would remember the name if he read the notices. The streets were darkening, but he knew his way. Into the empty Forum he stumbled, mistily surprised; his steps in the deserted square sounded so loud. He tried to walk quietly but could not then keep his balance, and relapsed into stamping along; but even this did not save him from a fall. In the gloom he failed to note the deep gutter running along the middle of the Forum. He tripped and lay at full length, once more drenched and befouled.

As he rose, he cursed: "Falcidius will have shut his shop." He had remembered the name! He realised this, and clapped his hands; but the hollow echoes frightened him, and he hastened across the pavement to the shelter of the opposite colonnade. Falcidius? He was uncertain again. *Falx* was a reaping-hook. When he fell, he had been cast down like a swathe before the hook. Was that what had made him think of the name? "Scythe-man, are you my destroyer, the evil of the dark, or are you a fat-faced tradesman, waiting to tell me where Cytheris lives?"

He tramped on and reached the head of the Sacred Way. But it was too dark to read any signs. He saw a skulking figure and called out, but it fled, and Gallus, giving chase, fell on the roadway and lost the shadow. Going up to the nearest doorway, he banged on the shutters.

"Go away," came a quaking voice.

"I want Falcidius, the jeweller, damn him." Gallus tried to think of an excuse. "His house is on fire. His country house."

"The tenth shop down," answered the voice, suspiciously.

Gallus set off counting the houses, but lost one and had to return. He banged again. "Was it here I asked?"

"Yes," said the hidden householder. "But you won't ask another time. I can see you're alone, and if you don't go off I'll come out with some men and a cudgel."

Gallus took more care after the threat. He left one of his shoes before the house, to mark it, and then hobbled away. But he didn't need any more reminders. He counted carefully and was sure he had the tenth house.

He rattled at the shutters. "Falcidius. I want Falcidius."

There was no reply. Gallus kicked and punched. His hands were bleeding. The family must have run away. Perhaps they were all dead. He gave one last crashing kick, and a voice answered from the roof, "Go away."

Gallus had learned cunning. "I'm not alone," he bawled. "My men are waiting up the road. Are you Falcidius?"

"What do you want?" On any other evening a householder could have relied on calling aid from the neighbours, but it was no use shouting when all were locked away in terror of riots.

"Tell me where Cytheris lives."

The question was so unrelated to the fears of the jeweller that he couldn't understand. "What?" he asked, faltering.

Gallus repeated his question in tones of menace.

"Cytheris . . ." the man said. "The actress? Let me think. How can I remember off-hand?"

"Go and find out," called Gallus, "and I'll spare your house."

The man sped downstairs, rushing for the ledger of accounts. Then ravishing was the order of the night, not looting. So much the better. It was quite mad, but so was everything else. He found the entry with tremulous fingers and hurried upstairs again, hugging the tablet lest he should forget the ransoming address.

"Cytheris," he gabbled. "Cytheris lives off the Via Nova, the first lane past the Temple of Aius Loquens, third house on the right."

"Say it again," replied Gallus, trying to memorise the words. The jeweller once more recited the address, and Gallus with an effort got his bearings. He must enter the Forum. The Via Nova branched off before one came to the Temple of Vesta. Muttering the directions over and

over, he strode away, forgetting to reclaim his shoe as he passed back up the road.

ANTONIUS and Lepidus were disheartened. They had sat talking all the afternoon, hoping for explicit news of the conspiracy's extent, but so far they knew no more than in the morning. They had exhausted their fund of good-humoured defiance; the wine was turning sour in their stomachs; and they couldn't see why the conservatives waited to complete their coup. The only definite news was depressing. Messengers reported that all the Cæsarian officials had run away—gone south for a health-cure. One alone remained, Hirtius, consul-elect for the next year. He had answered that he would come when called. So Antonius and Lepidus, with a backing of one man, sat and waited and drank; and the day drew on.

Lucius Antonius spoke every now and then, scratching at the scar on his cheek. He wanted something violent. Start a riot; then see what happened.

"No use," said Marcus. "Merely the excuse these pig-stickers want, if they're looking for one to settle with us."

"Invite them here to a party," sneered Gaius.

"Wait," said Fulvia, who was embroidering.

"We'll wait," replied Marcus, "because there's nothing else to do." What was the use of drinking? It couldn't swab away the image of Cæsar stricken, the knowledge of cowardice in the blood of the drinker. But nothing could have saved Cæsar. I was too far away, too late, I tell you.

Suddenly he leapt to his feet. "There's someone coming. Listen."

They listened. Nothing. Then voices, the sound of doors scraping. The four men reached for their swords. Marcus drained his cup slowly, then flung it down with a laugh. "It's come," he said, in a voice of fierce satisfaction.

But only a slave entered. Some senators wished to see the consul. Who were they? No names given, but they came from the Capitol. Bring them in.

The four men sat back, taking a deep breath. Gaius hummed. Lucius gave a short, wild snigger. Lepidus yawned. Marcus narrowed his eyes, crouching tensely with

broad shoulders. Fulvia, who had not ceased embroidering, said softly, "I told you to wait."

Nothing more was said till the half-dozen senators were ushered in. Marcus Antonius showed them courteously to their seats. He had noticed at once that they were embarrassed and that they were comparatively unimportant men.

"You come from the Capitol?"

The spokesman, Servilius, bowed. "To speak with the consul."

Antonius waved his hand lightly towards his brothers and Lepidus. "Consider these my council."

Fulvia rose. "Since men have so far ruled the State with such brilliant success as not to need woman's aid, I'll leave you to decide the fate of Rome. If the mental strain is too great and you want dice to settle things for you, I'll send them in." She walked from the room with her lithe stride, belly out-thrust.

"Lepidus has no rank at Rome," commented Antonius, "since his title ceased with Cæsar's death; but I remind you that he is still governor of the Province." He looked round alertly and then fixed on Servilius with an air of frank confidence. "Cæsar is dead. We are all agreed on that point. Who sends you?"

"Perhaps you would like a list of those who struck down the tyrant?"

Antonius nodded, and Servilius read out the imposing list of names. The four men listened with growing despair. So many of the most active senators with administrative or war experience, the main Cæsarians, were in the conspiracy. Each name meant several lesser names; taken together, the list represented practically the whole of upper-class interests. Servilius ended, "That is the list of those who acted this morning. Of course such a list does not include the well-nigh endless supporters of their act of justice."

Antonius nodded again. The conspiracy was far more widespread, had deeper ramifications, than he had surmised in his most pessimistic calculations. "Since you have such an interesting list of adherents," he said, "why am I honoured with your visit?"

"As consul you have your duty to the State," said Servilius, hectoringly.

Antoni^{us} nodded. "I have my duty," he repeated, gravely.

"The group of public-spirited citizens now assembled on the Capitol," Servilius went on, "have decided therefore to see if you are ready to co-operate with them in re-establishing the State."

Antoni^{us} thought hard. These men had every power in their hands, yet they feared to call the Senate on their own responsibility and take over the government. In a revolution the sticklers for legality are doomed. But was it a revolution? Were these men so sure of their position that they could afford the luxury of strictly correct procedure?

"You mean you want me to join you—on the Capitol?"

"Put it that way. I prefer to say we offer you a chance to re-enter the life of the State. Two years ago you acted worthily as a defender of the peace. I am instructed to say that we invite you to fulfill that promise."

Antoni^{us} looked him in the face. "I was Cæsar's friend."

"So were others."

"Leave that out of it. I was Cæsar's friend. I speak of my reputation. The populace, as you know, are liable to become unruly at any moment now. If I were to ascend the Capitol with you, it would disturb them unduly—while, as you know, their emotions have no lasting power. If you really wished me to help you, would you ask me to come to the Capitol?"

"You are for the State or against the State."

"Now, now," said Antoni^{us}, suavely. "We have discussed that already. You know where my heart lies. Explain what I have said to Brutus. Tell him I have great trust in his judgment. Meanwhile I must discuss the matter with my friends. Surely that is all you wish. Let us agree to leave the matter open till this time tomorrow."

The ambassadors had come determined to extort a definite reply, but they looked doubtfully at one another. After all, Antoni^{us} had taken the whole matter very quietly. Why unnecessarily precipitate things? One day's truce wouldn't do any harm: there was truth in the remark about the populace. Antoni^{us} saw the men wavering and felt that he

had them. There was a basic weakness somewhere; if he could find it, he would beat them all. One of the senators plucked at the sleeve-fold of the gown of Servilius, who was the only choleric-minded among the six. Whispers. Antonius looked away, composing his face into an expression of decorous grief.

"Till this time tomorrow then," said Servilius, grudgingly.

Antonius rose. "You will be returning to the Capitol?" Politely he ushered the men out. "Lucky the air is not chilly. I trust you will not be disturbed by the populace on your way back. Most likely they won't recognise you in the dark. I'm doing my best to keep them orderly. But you know what a Roman mob is like. . . ."

He saw the embassy out through the hall, and then came slowly back. The others sat motionless, waiting his return. Standing in the doorway he regarded his brothers and Lepidus for a few moments. They waited for him to speak. At last he spoke quietly.

"It was kind of our friends on the Capitol to let us know they're a pack of scared fools. Now let us see what can be done about it."

He came suddenly to life. He slapped his chest and boomed with laughter. Leaping into the room, he caught up a flagon, drained it greedily, threw it at the ceiling, gripped Lucius, and rolled with him, wrestling on the floor.

Fulvia appeared at the doorway. "You needn't explain. I listened through the curtains."

Antonius rose with bright eyes. "Now, Lepidus, you get to work among the veterans. It's dark, but much can be done. Send out everyone you can find to visit the taverns. Ask them all to spread the news. A roll-up in the Forum tomorrow. Revenge Cæsar—that's the password. And send a few men to follow up that deputation and pelt them in the dark. It'll put them in the right frame of mind to deliver our message." He turned to his brothers. "You, my lads, come with me. I've a small job to do."

PAST the Temple of the Speaker Speaking, the first lane. Gallus found it at last, after piteous inquiries at taverns. The fifth house. Five was an easy number to count, but he

made a mistake and wasted half an hour knocking at the wrong house, till he counted again and found the house of his search. The door opened at once, and a sleepy janitor looked out.

"I must see your mistress. Cytheris. Tell Cytheris I'm here," said Gallus, pushing his way in. The disgusted slave stared at the torn and muddled man whose breath stank of wine.

"She's out," he said, sure that such a visitor would be unwelcome.

Gallus took him by the throat. "Tell her it's me, Gallus," he said ferociously.

The slave disengaged himself and retreated. Help would be needed to eject this madman. Putting his head round the hangings on the left, he called, "Gnatho . . . Tlepolemus . . ."

Gallus recognised the trick and charged; but the slave dropped to the floor without waiting to be attacked, and continued shouting. Other slaves came running down the passage, and a woman's voice was heard.

Gallus stepped back. "Cytheris!"

She appeared at the end of the hall. Now that the search was completed, Gallus suddenly knew that he had no right to be where he was, that his claim on Cytheris was entirely one-sided, that he had made himself ridiculous, that he was in a degraded condition. He turned to run from the house, but the slaves were upon him, pinioning him roughly. Cytheris walked up, her face flushing indignantly.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?"

Gallus lowered his head and mumbled. "I'm a fool. I'm drunk. Forgive me."

She caught him by the chin and forced him to look up. "Who are you?"

That was the final blow. She did not even remember him. What was the use of saying anything? Let him be thrown out as he deserved, and let that be the end of it all.

But Cytheris at last remembered. He saw recognition awakening in her eyes. "What has happened to you?" she asked. "What have you done with yourself since last night?" He saw wonderment increasing. "And why have you come here?"

"I can't tell you." He twisted in the arms of the slaves. "I can't." He wailed. "Let me go."

Then she saw the blood matted on his head. "You're hurt."

He shook his head as if he could throw the wound off. "Nothing. Let me go. I've spoilt everything. It was mad of me to come. Look at me. I'm drunk."

She stood back and studied him with slow, pitying eyes. To his strained vision her eyes seemed opening wider and wider, dilating with petals of light.

"I love you," he said, very distinctly, and fainted.

OBSESSED with the consequences of Cæsar's death, everyone had forgotten the body of Cæsar dead. But three slaves, who had hidden behind the pillars of a portico, came out after a while and entered the Curia. They saw their butchered master, and stood lamenting round the corpse, afraid to touch it. At length they gathered courage, draped it with the rent purple gown, and lifted it reverently. They bore it out, and, choosing the least damaged of the abandoned litters, took home to Calpurnia all that was left of Cæsar; and Calpurnia looked at her dead husband and found him even stranger dead than living. But she was a faithful wife, and laid out the body on the best couch, and stripped it and laved it with scented water and clad it in the purest linen; and she would allow none of her slave-women to touch the body. All the offices of the dead she did with her own hands, shuddering as she washed the loins. Then she sat at the side of the corpse and rocked herself, moaning, as if she were rocking at her breast the child that she had failed to bear.

So Cæsar lay at rest; and those of his friends who had not stabbed him ran away; and the people skulked in the cellars and tenements; and his enemies held the Capitol.

When dusk came, Calpurnia lighted candles in bronze candle-sticks around the couch, and sat at the side of the corpse, still mourning dutifully and trying to think what manner of man he had been, and whether he had been very kind or very cruel. She anointed his brow and his hands and the soles of his feet with oil, and washed his wounds with old wine; and after that she felt easier. No one came to

the house. But that she did not think strange, for she had forgotten that he once ruled the world. She did not eat or drink. Finally, noticing that the bald patch he had disliked was visible, she fetched some bay leaves and made a garland and crowned him; and then she was contented, though she still sat at his side, rocking.

When Antonius knocked at the door, she bade the whimpering servants admit him. He entered with his two brothers and stood looking at the dead man whom he had served for ten years, and thought that he had never seen him resting until now; and all that was generous in him kindled and drew the heart out of him. He knelt and kissed Cæsar's right hand, which was torn where it had grasped one of the daggers.

Then he spoke to Calpurnia. "As your husband's colleague in the consulship, I have come to claim his papers, and any public funds that are here."

Calpurnia rose, eager to get rid of all such evidences of Cæsar's troubling past. She hurried from the room, and Antonius was left with his two brothers.

"I thought those blunderers would have neglected to come here."

But his elation faded again as he looked at Cæsar, at the mangled body, at the man so immeasurably greater than his slayers.

"By God, Cæsar," he cried, passionately, grinding his teeth, his chest heaving, "they have carved you for their dish, and I'll make them swallow the meat though they vomit out their guts."

Lucius nodded his head with slow decision, his eyes turned broodingly inwards. Gaius whistled softly.

Her arms piled with tablets and papyrus-rolls, Calpurnia returned. She threw the bundles on the floor. "There is more, much more," she said, wearily, passing her hand over her brow. "Please take it all. And the money too." She wanted to be alone with Cæsar again, though she knew she would not close her eyes in sleep until the body was carried away out of the house; but she had felt uncannily peaceful and wished to see the visitors go.

Antonius moved towards the door. "I have men here." He beckoned to the veterans in the hall.

IV

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

MEN, awaking next morning, turned over and began gathering their minds with difficulty towards the accustomed tasks; and suddenly they remembered. Cæsar was dead, and nothing was settled. The voice was stopped, and now there was only silence. The tasks, the routine existence of each man seemed drably unfamiliar, disturbed and disturbing. Those who were free, lay abed, and grasped their wives, not from desire, but from the desperate wish to hide; and the wives closed their eyes and held fast to the bed-frame, for they too were frightened.

On the Capitol, the Liberators, who had slept in beds hastily prepared from rushes and mattresses, were sick and depressed. Their bones were sore, and the morning was cold. The gladiators, who had camped in one of the small groves near the Tarpeian Steps, were stamping about, wondering if they would get a chance to cut throats and be praised for it; and they and the freedmen, who had emerged from the opposite grove, were starting fires. A breakfast of porridge, bread, honey, and watered wine was shared out. Decimus Brutus had taken charge of the Commissariat last evening and sent down some slaves to collect food; which had been done after some doors were knocked down. The shaking shopkeepers had produced the goods and then stared incredulously at the proffered coins. But the word had got round that pillaging was begun; and before dawn some hungry proletarians had sacked a few bakeries in the Subura.

All through the night the messengers from the Capitol and the house of Antonius on the Carinæ had been threading the streets, occasionally blundering into one another and brawling. With dawn Lepidus sent men still further afield. All the veterans in Rome or the vicinity were to be warned;

the bosses of the remaining workers' clubs were asked to marshal their men and roll up in the Forum. The sun had no sooner scattered the first gleams of his uprising over the house-tops than Lepidus, with the body of soldiers already collected, marched to the Forum and picketed all the strategic points. The smaller bands of the conservatives' freedmen retreated after some skirmishing; and it was clear that the reactionaries, however imposing on paper, had not enough strength to sieze Rome. The absense of Brutus, the city-prætor, from his tribunal particularly roused the spirits of the Cæsarians.

One episode alone lent courage to the conservatives. A minor prætor, Cinna, after mounting the dais beside Gaius Antonius, bade his lictors depart, threw off his purple-edged gown, overturned his ivory curule-chair, and declared that he would hold office from the People but from no Tyrant. There was a shout of rage from the soldiers, but Cinna withdrew with his supporters before the crowd understood what he was doing. But his defection was soon forgotten, and merely underlined the apparent abdication of the conspirators from the magistracies.

Business was suspended and no litigants appeared before the courts; but the fact that the only magistrates present were Cæsarians had its effect. Antonius had arrived early to show himself in consular insignia and carry through formalities that would emphasise still further the withdrawal of the conspirators. He was feeling very confident, deliberately casting himself into the swirl of events that had succeeded the deadly inaction of yesterday afternoon. What he sought he did not know. Fear of his own destruction, a bitter wish to revenge Cæsar, a stormy hope of achieving power: his motives were hotly entangled, and he did not wish to dissect them. He wanted the escape of action; wine-fumes rayed the world with an insidious excitement and contempt.

He had it all clear. The conspirators were a set of flabby fools. Decimus Brutus, a good soldier, must be overawed; for he alone could become a danger. Cassius had no province allotted; Trebonius had Asia, but Asia was far away; Decimus had Cisalpine Gaul. The man who swayed

Cisalpine Gaul with an army would be master of Rome. Antonius recalled the moment when, six years ago, he had sighted Cæsar at Ariminum, just across the border-line; as tribune he had been fleeing from Rome to announce to Cæsar the wilful infringement of the inviolable rights of the people, and that had been the signal for the Civil War. He felt his heart smitten at the memory of Cæsar's welcoming smile, his far-seeing smile. Don't haunt me, Cæsar, I'm doing your will. The soldier with Cisalpine Gaul was master of Rome. Therefore Decimus must be dislodged. If he was persuaded to resign, Antonius could arrange to get the province.

So, waiting till news of the demonstrations in the Forum had had time to reach the Capitol, Antonius sent an amiable message, suggesting that Decimus Brutus should descend to discuss matters with Hirtius. Hirtius couldn't be trusted; but he was thoroughly frightened and would frighten Decimus in turn. That was all that was needed. The conservatives wouldn't suspect Hirtius of double-dealing—and rightly so, for, a sincere admirer of Cæsar, he saw now only that everything was ruined and that any compromise was preferable to the threatening anarchy.

The reply came, and Antonius smiled on the world. The worried conspirators agreed to the suggestion; and soon the reluctant Decimus descended with his bodyguard and a worthless promise of safe passage. Without a doubt he would be depressed into making the concession.

It was all so very easy, thought Antonius.

DOLABELLA strode into the Forum. Both sides had forgotten his existence, and now Antonius cursed. He felt his anger against the youth die away; trivial feuds couldn't survive the coming of real stress. If only he'd remembered to get in touch with Dolabella and guarantee to drop the veto of his consulship—that would have checkmated the conservatives for it would have meant two Cæsarian consuls. Why hadn't the fool sent word? Was it too late? Antonius looked round for Lepidus, to use him as a go-between; but Dolabella had already precipitated matters.

Gowned as consul, he mounted a tribunal, and, surrounded by a group of followers, spoke to the Forum. "Romans, you

can rely on me to see that no one meddles with the popular rights; but I refuse to act with a colleague who has shown himself a murderer of Roman citizens when they were only asking for their dues—a traitor to Cæsar, since he sought to thwart Cæsar's wish and hinder my election—a rogue and a drunken opportunist, Marcus Antonius."

Antonius did not stir. Let the boy have his say. It was a pity, but Antonius himself was to blame for not having remembered.

The crowd didn't know how to take Dolabella's speech. The group near the tribunal cheered loudly, and Dolabella continued. "Since, therefore, the State has ceased to exist, I see no other course than to approach the senators now occupying the Capitol. As deputy-consul, I am made full consul by Cæsar's death. I shall thus be able to offer a mediating and mollifying influence, and to safeguard your interests. Romans, have no doubt that I am acting only on your behalf."

He stepped quickly from the tribunal, and, amid the plaudits of his followers and a growl of puzzled dissatisfaction from the mob, proceeded towards the Capitol. The fool, thought Antonius; he thinks himself very clever; he knows they'll leap at anyone that can claim consular position; he thinks he's played a fine trick against me; perhaps he has, but there's little he'll gain out of it.

On the wall was a painted curtain showing Helen as she came naked from the bath to be surprised by her guest Paris. Gallus tried hard to think where he had seen it before. Nowhere. It was Helen that he had seen, Helen who died hundreds of years ago, the heroine of poetry who parted the murmuring words of Homer like a wood-goddess with eyes slanting through the lifted leaves. Verses from the elegy that Catullus had written fourteen years before on his dead brother drifted through the mind of Gallus:

Troy then by Helen's rape had roused the host . . .
Ah Troy where Europe on to Asia bleeds,
the bitter tomb of men and worthy deeds . . .
my brother also died at Troy. I weep.
I weep O my lost brother . . .
far in an alien land, and here mourn I . . .
that Paris might not laugh and toss his hair. . . .

Gallus would be a better poet yet. Poor Catullus coughing blood. He moaned feebly and heard a sound on the other side of the curtain. Though he didn't know it, the sound came from a slave-girl posted to call Cytheris when he awoke.

He drew back his head into the covert of sleep, fading into a half-dream. He was hiding from the searchers, under a bed, a cavern of maidenhair, under the boughs of a forest rifted with light, running; and a panther leapt at him, but missed. Gallus laughed, knowing that he was dreaming, and yet believing the dream. He was sure he had forgotten to take his mother home, though she was dead five long years. Someone pounded on the rock, breaking into the cavern; and his head pained.

Cytheris was standing over him. He opened his eyes and remembered, but did not dare speak first. She also seemed shy. At last she said, "How do you feel this morning?"

"Better, much better," he babbled, finding his voice and then unable to control it. "How can I thank you? You ought to have had me thrown out. It was unforgivable. I can't imagine what you thought of me——"

She silenced him by placing her finger on his lips. "Don't exhaust yourself. I have some medicine here that will help you. You'll sleep again and awaken refreshed." She took up a small crystal phial and poured out six drops through the tiny spout; then she held the cup to his lips. "It's bitter but there's a little wine in the cup."

He pushed the cup aside, not wanting to lose her presence yet. "Why are you so good?" His voice, meant to be pleasing and tender, sounded querulous. He wanted her to make some reference to his declaration of love; for that, and that alone, he recalled of what he had said. She knew what was in his mind, and dreaded him speaking.

"Drink," she said, gently.

"But you don't even know my name." He was affronted by her impersonal solicitude. She treated him merely as a patient, not as a man who had dramatically declared his love for her.

"Your name is Cornelius Gallus. I know."

He was blissfully satisfied by her remark, and drank the potion down noisily, held up by her arm behind his back.

She had known who he was. That made everything different. She knew he was a poet.

Cytheris watched him as he lay back with happily closed eyes, his wet mouth parted, the tip of his tongue moving uneasily across his lips. She had sent a slave to inquire at Dolabella's house who was the young man next to her at the dinner—but not so as to betray any interest. The slave had been told to call for a bracelet that she had left in the bedroom, and to ask casually. So she had learned the name, but no more. She was troubled as she looked down at Gallus, and wished that he would recover quickly; but she couldn't turn him out till he was able to walk. Again she felt shy. She hoped that he wouldn't mention love again. She had never felt shy before—or not as far back as she could remember.

She sighed. She preferred not to remember. She walked swiftly from the room, drawing the curtains with clumsy speed. She wanted to shut out the past, to shut out this Gallus who made her think of past and future. Wretched creature, why didn't he get better?

Stopping in the hall, she instructed the janitor that the expected visitors—a young noble and his friends—were not to be admitted.

THE arrival of Dolabella on the Capitol raised the spirits of the conspirators, though Cicero, in his animosity, could not let the occasion pass without commemorative sarcasms. "Why has little Dolabella been arrested?" he asked, in a loud voice, referring to the guard of tall lictors. "And why has he dressed up as a small boy again?" For children wore the purple-edged gown, and Dolabella was very short and slight.

The senators grinned, but hastily agreed to authenticate Dolabella's claim to the consulship in return for any needed support against Antonius. A new discussion arose, and it was decided that any impression of fear must be removed; the people must be shown that the Liberators were merely biding their time, confident in the justice of their cause and the strength of their resources. Brutus and Cassius, as the chief conspirators and as prætors, must appear in the Forum; Brutus could then deliver a speech and put everything right.

All agreed at once on this course. Let Brutus and Cassius go down. Brutus and Cassius stood palely and proudly in their places, and assented. But when the question arose as to the escort for the prætors, there was less energetic insistence. The other conspirators had no wish to face the mob. Speakers pointed out that the wish was to impress, not aggravate. Finally it was decided that all the supporters who had not actually joined in the slaying should accompany the prætors, and make as formidable a procession as possible, guarded by the gladiators and armed slaves.

Down from the Capitol wound the procession. Cicero was close behind Brutus and Cassius, and he remembered that other procession made by the conservatives to impress the mob—on the evening when the Catilinarian conspirators had been led to their death. Then Cicero had marched at the head, and it had been the revolutionaries who were on their trial; now it was the oligarchy that stood at the tribunal, and the populace were sitting in judgment. He hated this appeal to the mob; but he had raised no objections; it would have been useless.

Brutus felt stifled. That feeling had grown on him ever since the barricades had been raised on the Capitol. The argument about slave and free continued in his head, unnerving him. The slaying of Cæsar should have ended all doubts. It was in that belief he had forced himself to the blow; but the act had made things worse, far worse. What he would say in the Forum, he had no idea. He wanted to curse the mob as a pack of wolves that deserved nothing better than a despot, a cruel not a paternal one like Cæsar. He would have to speak from the Rostra—Cæsar's Rostra, placed at the south-eastern end of the square. That was most distasteful. Cæsar had demolished the old platform beside the Senate House, and set up the new one at a distance, to show that appeal henceforth must be made to public opinion, not to a privileged class; and here Brutus was about to emphasise the intention by making that very appeal.

The lofty platform, lined with Grecian marbles and hung with two lines of bronze ship-beaks, was not yet quite finished; the gracefully moulded plinths and cornices lacked a few pieces, revealing the travertine-blocks beneath, and the sides

were not fully connected with the Græcostasis, the curved stand at the rear thick with statues. The only way to get on to the Rostra was to ascend the Græcostasis, which rested on the Capitoline slope, and then step across.

The crowd was inclined to become noisy; but Antonius had told the soldiers to keep order and bid the people restrain themselves. The show of upper-class strength must be met with a show of proletarian solidarity: a stubborn silence would effect this better than any uproar. So Brutus and his companions found a passage cleared for them without outcry, without even occasional whistlings or jeers. At first the quiet was a relief; then it turned into a menace, the dull brooding atmosphere before a thunderstorm. Heavily it closed round the limbs of the men moving; heavily it muffled their words. Brutus felt it even more oppressive as he came forward to the marble rail of the Rostra; the sea of faces below seemed packed motionless, dead, frozen in a stony hatred. He was gazing on an ugly mosaic flat as the pavement on which the men stood; and the herring-bone pattern of the tiles at his feet wavered and blurred like the ribbed waves of the sea. How could he stand there and speak?

But he spoke. He did not need to think of what to say. The burning thoughts came to him, clear, elementally urgent; but, as ever, he uttered them with a pedantic stolid vehemence, a ponderous fury, making jerky broken gestures, then standing still and sinking his head a moment. The obsessed sincerity of his voice gripped the listeners, but not with sympathy; it held and yet repelled.

Cicero listened with the discomfort that a speech from Brutus always awoke in him, but this time the emotion was infinitely intensified. What a chance was being wasted. What a different speech he himself would have delivered. Yet he knew that his own speech, beautifully considered as a thing of accumulative persuasion, would have provoked abuse and howls of rage; the mob at least listened to Brutus, though they would as likely turn to the statues of orators on the Græcostasis for words that meant anything in their ears.

Brutus ceased, and the conservatives with a brief hopefulness looked down into the Forum. But not a sound was

heard, except a deep breath from the staring multitude. Brutus staggered back, as if struck in the face—suddenly released from the tension of his speech. With a great effort he recovered himself and rejoined the side of Cassius. They exchanged glances, half offering and asking support, half resentfully as if afraid of blame.

There was nothing more to be said or done. The mob preserved an impassive hostility; not one shout of hate or encouragement broke from the serried masses. Only the slow susurrus of the human forest could be heard. Trying to hold their heads high and to step easily, the procession returned to the Capitol.

“I must see Antonius,” said Cleopatra.

Sara humped up his left shoulder uneasily. “And how, your Majesty? At home he keeps a wild-cat wife, and he’d make no tryst for fear of daggers. I gather that a public meeting wouldn’t suit your purposes.”

“I must see him. There is no one else.”

She caressed her lips with a finger-tip. The world was a tainted place; and time, the gnawing rat, laired in even the most beautiful flesh. Otherwise one would be able to shut out the taint of men in the contemplation of one’s own limbs, the conscious self separated from the world. But in the blood was the contagion; the body was not complete in itself; under the web of fine sensation lay the belly, a poison-spider, demanding its prey. Cæsar was dead.

“I must see Antonius,” she repeated, through gritted teeth, drumming with her fingers on the mirror in her lap.

Sara knew better than to contradict her, and wondered how he could retire without attracting her notice. How easily he could strangle her—now, before she could call to her maids in the alcove—strangle and ravish her at the same time. One day she would torment him a little too far.

“Didn’t you hear me?” She lifted the mirror and flung it at him. It struck him edgeways on the shoulder and then clattered on the floor. He grinned. A bruise was nothing. He felt more pleasantly disposed.

“I’m thinking,” he said. “Give me a few moments.”

THE abortive demonstration in the Forum delighted Antonius. It amounted to a breach of the truce and cleared his way to a counter-repudiation. He would send round a summons for the Senate to meet early the next morning, and it would be easy to terrify the senators into passing any decrees he wished. Decimus Brutus would be ready by that time to accept the loss of Cisalpine Gaul; the Senate would transfer it at once to Antonius.

He drank. He wished to escape the question in his mind. It was sufficient that he needed Gaul for his safety. Bleak moments of fear swept over him; moments when revenge for Cæsar seemed futile, the last thing that Cæsar would have wanted; moments when the thought of absolute power was a bewildering anxiety. What could a man do if he were handed the tumultuous maddening world to govern at his will? The isolation of such power would be terrific. How had Cæsar endured it?

Yet there was a lure in the thought. Power. A sense blended by the towering arrogance of drunkenness, the joy of swinging a sword at helpless flesh, the sweet crunch of an apple under the teeth, the wet warmth of a woman embraced. All the memories of his seething blood, ghosts of the prey gained in the careless past, beckoning with promise of a greater future.

He awoke out of his dream, between shouting orders to the veterans, drinking, cursing at Lucius. He awoke to find himself standing withdrawn for a moment in Fulvia's dressing-room; and Fulvia was leaning back beneath his clasp. How strong her bended spine, her wide, plump shoulders; how restless her limbs. She moved her mouth across his throat.

"We're going to win, you and I."

He felt the heat of her need. She did not question the meaning of power any more than the charioteer rounding the stone pillar of the meta questioned the need to control the horses with the reins in his hands—the reins wound round his wrist and tied to his waist. If the chariot overturned, where would the driver be?

Antonius felt afraid of Fulvia, more afraid of her than he had been of anything else in his whole life. He wanted to

ask her, "But am I worthy of power? I dare not, I am not worthy." But he knew that she wouldn't understand at all; she would be hurt, enraged; she would mock him coldly. So he held her closely and sought out her mouth, to kiss it, to stop it from moving hotly across his throat.

"You're wanted."

Gaius appeared at the door, regarding the couple with malevolent pleasure. Antonius, glad to escape, let Fulvia go, and went out, brushing past Gaius. Gaius continued leering at Fulvia.

"Shall I finish what the brute began?"

"If you touch Pisidice again," said Fulvia, staring back, and undisconcerted by her disarray, "I'll whip you."

"Don't be jealous," he jeered. "I only took her because you turned me down."

A young girl of about fourteen entered at the further doorway, throwing aside the tasselled curtains. She was unlike Fulvia except for the brightly glazed look of the eyes, the brightened colour of the cheekbones; her face was oval, and she wore her hair drawn back so that her lifted eyebrows gave an impression of ceaseless surprise. She stood looking at the two with her lazy air of suspicious enjoyment.

"Did I interrupt an adultery? Don't mind me."

"Behave yourself," said Fulvia, sharply. The girl was Clodia, daughter of her first marriage.

"It's all right. I overheard everything. I can see, mother, you're as chaste as—as—I don't know what. Do you, Gaius?"

"Get out," said Fulvia to Gaius, and he withdrew, with a sweeping bow. Fulvia turned to her daughter, "You little fool, keep your eyes and your mouth more closed, or I'll send you back to the country again. We're playing for more than you can understand."

"Very well," said Clodia, with slow, deliberate emphasis, "I'll keep my eyes and my mouth shut—but what about the rest of me?"

"I see that you'll have to go back to the country," replied Fulvia, doing up her hair with quick, skilful fingers. "You're a silly little noisy girl."

Clodia reddened. "I'm not." She came nearer. "Dear mother, I think you're wonderful. I'd love to be able to

crush a man with a few words like you can. I'm sure I'd stutter, and then I'd scratch his eyes out. Don't send me away again."

"Then don't leave your nurse." Fulvia went to the door and called. "Bhebeo!"

A fat, middle-aged woman with little sunken eyes entered.

"O there she is." She hastened to Clodia with flapping slippers. "What a girl she's turning out. Putting sense into her head is like trying to wash a clay-brick clean. She's worse than a cow with a gadfly under her tail."

"Look after her better," said Fulvia, moving away. "If anything happens to her I'll have you sewn up in a sack full of cockroaches."

Clodia clapped her hands and looked wide-eyed at Bhebeo, as if watching the hungry cockroaches already at work.

"I'll do my best," said Bhebeo, shrilly, "but I'd as soon milk a he-goat. Some girls are that silly they could ruin themselves, if you ask me. I once had an apple without a single hole on its skin, and yet there was a maggot inside. I did hear of a girl who was got in the family-way by the wind like the mares in Lusitania, but I never believed it before."

Clodia took her mother in her arms and kissed her. "Do whip Gaius," she whispered, and ran giggling from the room, followed by the waddling Bhebeo.

Fulvia shivered, and turned towards the next room where she had heard the cries of her infant son. What weak creatures men were. What would they do if they felt their body weighing and sickening for nine months with a strange life within? Yet on that chance of drawn-out pain, with anguish at the end, the woman gambled with her body, matching the call of lust against the plans and ideals of the wandering man. Compensation was needed somewhere. Let other women find it in jewels and flattery; she wanted something that went deeper, wider, than the haunches broadening beneath the womb-burden. She didn't want anything, but by the God of Women she'd make everyone sweat to gain it for her.

The child whimpered again, and she picked him up, then smiled, burying her face against his soft small body. He ceased his whimpering and cooed, reaching out with

fat stubby hands at her face and hair, as she kissed and nuzzled.

LIKE the gurgling of a tide first heard in the rock-crannies and seaweed-covered holes at the foot of a cliff, the anger of the people was murmuring up through the alleys and slum-dens of Rome: coming through the cautiously opened doors of cellars and smoky taverns, the window-holes of rickety attics, the rifts in darkened closets under stairs, the squalid partitioned apartments where two or three families slept together. Fear that the dole would cease, that the colonising schemes would be quashed, that the grants of land would be revoked and the promise of more land nullified. Anger at the deed of blood.

For the poor, flung together in suffering, could intuit a bond of brotherhood now lost to the nobles who had forgotten in a capitalised world the race-bond. The old compact was gone, and a new compact was being formed; and it was the slave and the starving workman who sensed the sanctions of the future age. The upper-classes clung to forms that had once been pure and inspiring, and sought to turn life back to the departed age of farmer-warriors; or clung, avaricious and spendthrift, to their possessions and privileges, deaf to the voice of doom.

"Why have they killed Cæsar? Only because they feared what he'd do to them and their like."

"Cæsar was giving everyone fair play. He was killed by a gang of crooks."

"Cæsar died for us."

Bring your love, sufferers, to the man who died for his fellows. The mighty has fallen. Must his work therefore fall? Is the mighty one dead because his body is defiled by the enemy? Will he not reappear, in the same or another shape, breaking through the tomb, returning with rescue?

How can Cæsar die, since he died for man?

Look up, you boozing veteran with your warty nose in a tankard. Tears are rolling down your cheeks. Lick them sideways with your tongue, and their salt will make you thirstier yet. Remember the solemn Mysteries and what they have told you in their chapels: the lessons learned from

the voice of the priest and the images of the god suffering, dying, and reborn. The god became man to save the earth. The lamb and the bull became man to save you. The god had a face like the face of Cæsar. Who is a god? The blind sky, the ruthless forces of nature that ignore you, the universal mind that the philosophers talk about, unity in manifoldness, the comprehensible laws of energy that can never be comprehended? You care nothing for such things. God is a man. God is the man that means the most to you.

Look back into the confusing screen of the past, into the wavering riddle of birth, when the womb opened with gripping pangs and dropped you into a great opened hand, into the storm of cold and heat; and the hand upheld you, and the waters of birth receded, and you lay frightened amid flame and ice, the jagged edge of light, hungering and wailing with a voice that you did not know as your own.

Food came and filled you with warmth, and tore you again. The storms of colic broke the world of your body; for you lived only in the flesh, and the prickles of heat were the stars of over-arching darkness, and the sun was the navel through which you had once drunk your mother's blood, and the moon was the breast of your severed mother, coming and then going again; and the hand upheld. You were upheld by the cradling hand, and the storms slackened, and you dared to sleep and find peace at moments and to smile; and the hand was the hand of the Father.

O yes, let the philosophers talk. God is a man.

"Hercules, I'd like to get my fingers on their throats."

"Cæsar died for us."

WHEN urinating away from home, Amos had a sense of sin. He had a sense of sin now as he stood against the house-wall on the Tiber Road: a sense accentuated by the appearance of a curly-haired young girl from the near doorway. But she threw a kiss and moved on down the road. The main reason, however, for the sense was the fact that urine was of prime importance in the fulling industry, and everyone in the household was expected to contribute his or her daily product. Old Ezra had pronounced ideas on the chemistry of the subject. The women's, he said, served only for washing

coarse garments and removing mud-stains; the men's was best for the finishing touches. Amos had always accepted this thesis before; but today he felt that if ever Karni was a member of the household he would protest strongly.

He was waiting for Karni. He hadn't the courage to venture again into the grounds of the villa lent by Cæsar to Cleopatra—particularly now Cæsar was dead. But he was loitering about in the road outside, hoping that Karni would be sent on some shopping expedition; for that was her usual task. Though very worked-up over his experiences of yesterday, he hadn't liked to mention them at home; and he felt that he must communicate them to Karni. He was closer to her now; there seemed a more solid link. She was employed in the kitchen of a Queen; he had stood alone in a huge room looking at a murdered Dictator. The connection, though hard to put into words, was emotionally obvious to Amos. Also, he was wearing a yellow cloak.

At last, after encountering many false alarms and almost falling into the Tiber through leaning on a rotten post, he did see Karni appear. Sauntering towards her, he tried to pretend that he was walking that way casually; but she refused to accept the pretence.

"Have you been waiting long?" she asked, with the tiniest of dimples in her cheeks. "Why didn't you send a message in? You know things are easy with me. I'm not like a common slave," she explained, loftily. "And as long as I do my duties my time's my own."

"I saw Cæsar lying dead on the floor," said Amos, equally important. "He had his neck twisted and blood all over him, and one of his shoes was coming off."

"Where did you get the cloak," answered Karni. "You do look fine."

He was divided between annoyance at having his story spoilt and pleasure at the compliment. "O it's only an old cloak. My father got it for a bad debt. It belonged to a man with a squint."

"Your father must be a good man," said Karni, musingly, "and a loving father too."

"O yes," agreed Amos. "But where are you going today?" Karni was going to order some fish and condiments in

the Macellum; and Amos went with her, excelling himself in officiousness and narrowly escaping assault from the combined guild of fishmongers. He could never have haggled as well, not even if his father had been standing by, and he felt that Karni must look on him as a well-dressed man-of-the-world who thought nothing of buying fish in large quantities. He was emboldened to stop her after they crossed the bridge again, and to suggest that she needn't go home yet.

"Let's have a drink somewhere."

But Karni didn't want to go into a crowded tavern or cookshop. "Don't you know somewhere quiet?" she repeated. After arguing awhile, he saw what she meant.

"I'll find a place. You wait here."

Off he dashed, invading the nearest respectable-looking shops, taking the master aside, and whispering, "Could you rent me a room for an hour or two? I've got a girl-friend that doesn't like going down under the bridge. She was brought up too well."

He was thrown out of a draper's and a spicer's, spent five minutes trying to explain more guardedly to a deaf man who turned out to be a customer waiting for the apothecary to return from the rear, then became more careful, and at length found an ironmonger who was ready to accommodate him for an agreed sum. Amos paid him and then discovered that the slaves who had been lounging at the side of the shop were about to resume hammering operations. It was hardly a quiet shop. "But she's a bashful girl," he reasoned to himself, "she meant lonely, not quiet. She won't mind a bit of banging and clattering, as long as there aren't any bugs." He had a good nose for bugs, and was sure that the shop was free from them; probably bugs didn't like noise.

He hurried back to the corner where he had left Karni, and to his despair found that she had gone. But a small boy, who was playing in the mud, looked up, cocked an eye at him, and remarked, "Was it you she told me to watch out for?"

"Karni said she'd wait for me here," said Amos, struggling with a desire to confide everything to the small boy.

"She borrowed my chalk and wrote on the wall," said the boy. "That's all I know about her. I thought she'd give me

a copper. She used up nearly all my chalk." He looked up hopefully at Amos.

"She said you'd give me something."

But Amos was searching for the message on the wall. Then he found it. "Amos same time tomorrow I can't wait for ever Karni wear your cloak wont you."

"She said she'd poke her finger in your eye if you didn't give me a copper," shouted the small boy.

Amos considered him severely. "Learn to speak the truth, young boy. Do you know what is written in the Sacred Scriptures? Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, and the forward tongue shall be cut off."

He wagged his finger and walked away, leaving the small boy to put out his tongue and weigh a handful of mud.

The mark was too good to miss. A lump of mud landed on the back of the yellow cloak, and a small boy scudded for safety, knocking over an old man who was leading a goat on a halter. Amos was agonised. How would he wash the cloak in time for the morrow without arousing his father's suspicion? For he hadn't shown the cloak at home. O why hadn't he bought security for a copper?

UNABLE to bear the waiting, Servilia decided to call on Porcia. Besides, she wanted to see how Porcia was taking things; she hoped somehow to find her broken down. But Porcia was still radiant; her low smooth brow, her calm white face, her burning blue eyes, had never revealed greater happiness. After her breakdown on the morning of the murder she had reawakened with her nimbus of contentment intact. She clasped the hands of Servilia, honoured to touch the woman whose flesh had borne Brutus; and Servilia was disturbed, as she had been for weeks now, by something witless in the radiance of her daughter-in-law, also her niece. A thought struck her.

"Are you with child?" she asked, abruptly.

"No," said Porcia, who, to Servilia's relief, did not take the question as a curious salutation; but the thought had penetrated to her mind. She had borne a son to her first husband Bibulus; but she had never thought of giving Brutus a son, she felt too complete in the lap of his love.

For a moment she wondered if this attitude was wrong, if Brutus had complained to his mother; then she relapsed into her mood of fevered aloofness, waiting without agitation for the coming of Brutus. He would come in his own time. He had slain Cæsar, as it had been fated.

But despite Porcia's quietness Servilia was still taken aback by her own remark. "I was now thinking of Tertulla," she said, apologetically. "I'm on my way to visit her, and I thought you might like to come with me." She had meant no such visit, but felt vaguely afraid of Porcia's apathy.

Porcia rose readily and then stopped. "I must stay here. I must be here to receive Marcus."

"But you'll be in lots of time. Tertulla's no distance. A message would bring you back in a few moments."

Porcia shook her head, frowning. "I must stay here."

Servilia saw that Porcia could not be moved, and was glad in a way to escape alone. She kissed Porcia's unresisting cheeks and went; and only as she reached the litter outside did she realise that neither of them had spoken a word about Cæsar's death. She told the men to carry her to the house of Cassius, thinking how different Tertulla was. Perhaps it wasn't advisable for cousins to marry, even if the Athenians didn't object to the union of half-brother and half-sister. There seemed something wrong with Porcia, though Brutus was absurdly loving; but Tertulla was normal in every way.

Tertulla was lying down in a loose woollen shift dyed orange, discontentedly considering the weight of the child she carried. It was being unable to see what was going on inside one that worried; if one could only take out the funny little baby, have a look at it, and then put it back again, there would be pleasure in carrying. She had heard of Cæsar's death, and merely shrugged her shoulders, and gone on lying down, wriggling her toes and watching them. So that was the reason why Cassius had made her go on that visit to Brutus on the evening of the 14th. The thought irritated her excessively, for the one thing she could not stand nowadays was being moved about. She wanted to lie on the couch, eat fruit, wriggle her toes, and listen for any movements of the babe within.

Servilia entered solicitously, and at once Tertulla found all her irritation centre on the intruder. Before Servilia could say a word, Tertulla stared into her face and burst out, "I can see by the way that you're looking at me that you knew all along what was going on. Now tell a lie and say you didn't."

Servilia stood back, blinking nervously, making no denial. Tertulla's protest grew in strength. "How could you do it? I can't bear you any longer. It was you that put Marcus up to it, and he dragged poor Gaius in. I know it was all you. Marcus always does what you tell him. He ought to be ashamed of himself, a grown man. I suppose when he does anything wrong he comes to you and asks you to smack his bottom. But why did you want to go killing Cæsar? I hate you all."

"You mustn't talk like that," said Servilia, feebly. "Marcus and Gaius know what is best——"

"They're fools, pigs, black beetles, murderers!" retorted Tertulla. "I'm ashamed of you all, and you the most." She paused, and then started weeping. "O mother, how could you do it? He was so sweet, and he used to be your lover."

Servilia was petrified. The room revolved in darkening spirals. She grasped a chair to steady herself. "You don't know what you're saying——"

"I do. Everyone knows it. I wouldn't be surprised if I was his daughter, but it's no use asking you. You wouldn't tell me the truth, and I don't suppose you know for sure. I hope I am. I'd rather be his daughter than the man you married. I loved Cæsar." So she had, she loved him, he was a darling man. "He gave me a wonderful pearl, almost as big as the one he gave you, and he kissed me. I'd have given myself to him if he'd asked me. There, I would."

Servilia was stricken dumb. Her mind would not function. She had never thought anyone knew for certain. A few people might have suspected; but how could Tertulla be so sure? An icy fear gripped her heart. If Tertulla knew, surely Marcus must know too. Servilia grasped her throat with one hand and beat wildly at the air with the other. "You mustn't say such things . . . thoughtless girl . . . no one knew . . . only a friend . . ."

The words died away, and she was filled with agonising horror at herself. "O God help me, I could have saved him, and I let him die," she cried, frantically, and threw herself over Tertulla's legs, weeping uncontrollably. Why should she pretend to herself any longer that she hadn't loved Cæsar, loved him always?

ANTONIUS was drunk, and had not wanted to take her, and for that reason she had made him take her, though she loathed his wine-sour breath, the tedium of his wine-numbed embrace. Now she lay thinking. She hated him, as always, for having taken her, for rolling into slumber while she throbbed awake. She hated him because the embrace was ended for him, but for her it might prelude nine months of fearful waiting. She hated him because he would go out into action tomorrow and she would sit at home.

But he was hers. Already her mind was busy, fighting to protect him, to attack all the other competitors for the vacant throne of power. She hated him, but she would have thrown her body between him and the arrow twanging from the bow of an enemy. She had borne him a son and had little more care for the child than for his father; but if milk had failed the world, she would have stabbed her breast and fed the child with blood.

Thinking in the darkness lay Fulvia, while sweat broke out of the pores of her inflamed body. She tossed about. She bit at her wrist and lay face down, one leg hanging out of the bed over the bed-rail, her toes tearing at the bear-skin rug.

In the room across the passage Lucius lay with his ear against the wall, listening. Was the creaking still going on in the room opposite? He clenched his teeth and ran a finger savagely down the scar on his cheek.

THE politicians slept, and the people slept, even those without shelter or those who had been drinking, gambling, and kissing; and whereas the politicians, whether fretting conservatives or stranded Cæsarians like Antonius, had no longer taken thought of Cæsar, seeing him as a dead man whose work for good or bad was done, the people heard only one cry in their hearts: "Cæsar has died for us."

And they knew that Cæsar was still their guardian, still the power to which they must look for comfort and sustenance. Did not all god-like figures die in martyrdom? Did not Dionysus have his body torn to pieces that the worshippers might be fed with his flesh and blood? Did not Adonis die gored in the arms of his mother-mistress that his body might yet spurt to new life in the earth, in the little pots of earth and water that the lamenting women called the Gardens of Adonis? Did not Attis die on the sacred tree that life might never die? Did not Osiris sail out into the waters, an image of clay and corn with face painted yellow and cheekbones green, and yet he came to life again in the harvest? Did not all these gods go down into darkness, into the rotting heat of hell, where the worm lives, and were they not raised from that darkness into the light again?

Ah, yes, every true god died that man might live. His flesh and blood became the bread and the wine of the mother-earth into which he died, embracing, and out of which, embracing, he was reborn. For thus life repeated itself; and the daughter, conceiving, turned her beloved, who was a son, into a father, herself becoming a mother; and the child was both of them reincarnated; and the joyous rings of marriage redeemed the spasm of birth; and life went on.

That was the voice of the people.

V

A COMPROMISE IS ARRANGED

IT was into a world of doubt and sick oppressiveness that Antonius woke. What was he doing? He was playing a fool's game. He didn't want Cæsar's place; he wouldn't know what to do with it if he had it. Power, which seemed so glorious when he was a subordinate, was now seen as something threatening, a horrible isolation of fear and responsibility, a voice that would sound forever into a man's ear until, mad with sleeplessness, he would die. The conspirators were right; no single man should dominate the State utterly, for no man dare. Cæsar was a mere freak; and anyhow he had wanted to get away to the Parthian War, for command in the campaigning field was a different matter. The quicker Cæsar was forgotten the better for everyone. The problem for Antonius was simply to save himself from being crushed.

Fulvia was watching him with her dark eyes as he sat up in bed. He stretched himself and kicked the bedclothes off his naked body, stripping her at the same time. She made no complaint. Antonius thumped vigorously on his hairy chest and called for wine. A boy entered with a decanter and cups on a tray. Antonius drank, beating lightly at his chest, his head thrown back.

"Hirtius will be here soon with the news that Decimus Brutus has renounced Cisalpine Gaul," said Fulvia, refusing a drink.

Antonius felt courage return. At least he would get a good province out of the muddle. He would have it given for five years by a special dispensation like that with which Cæsar had begun in Gaul.

"I'll make them give me both Gauls for five years."

"That's right."

Fulvia stirred for the first time, lifting up her knees one after the other. There was a pain in the small of her back. She went on, "Give me a drink after all."

Lucius came in without announcing himself. "Hirtius is waiting for you."

"I'll be with him," said Antonius, springing up and slipping a tunic over his head. He pushed his feet into shoes and hastened out.

Lucius stood looking at Fulvia stretched without covering on the bed. She stared back darkly but without challenge. His eyes narrowed, he scratched his scarred cheek slowly, turned slowly on his heel, and went from the room without a word.

Fulvia finished her wine, and then called, "Send Pisidice in."

The young girl entered, fresh-faced, wearing a pale blue shift. "Come and lie down beside me," said Fulvia, gently. "I feel so heated, and you are always so cool. Tell me more about that home of yours, the village in the hills, the pool where you bathed."

Pisidice snuggled against her, and Fulvia stroked the girl's brown hair tenderly, listening to her faltered words, feeling the heat pass out of her body, lulled by the young voice. From a mountain-pool came the cool young body, like a mountain-sapling, growing straight out of clean soil. How beautiful was firm young flesh, before the fevers misted out of their lurking-holes in the marshy blood and the bones grew wearisome and the back of the loins was crossed with pains.

HIRTIVS eyed Antonius distrustfully. "So he agreed to give up his province. He wants free travelling-passes for himself, Brutus, and Cassius. And he wants a guard while he remains at Rome."

Antonius laughed. "He can have his passes. Indeed I'll see that he gets them so quickly he won't need a guard. Thank you, Aulus."

Hirtius looked up with a touch of scorn. "What are you going to do? How are you going to succeed where Cæsar failed?"

"Why ask me that? There isn't only me. There's our whole party."

Hirtius smiled contemptuously. "The heart's gone out of things. Don't talk of our party. It was only a pack of careerists. The few good men it had are among the murderers. There's no hope for sanity in the State any longer. I believed in Cæsar, and yet now that I see how everything rested on his shoulders, how he's killed all initiative, I feel he was a force for evil. Not in himself. He was a great man, and he cared only for Rome. But in his effects. One man can't live for ever. The old constitution will have to come back—modified perhaps, but in essence the same. And now that I've done your work, I'm leaving Rome for a while. I'm no longer any use here. I don't understand things, and I want to see them from a distance."

Again he looked sharply at Antonius, and Antonius felt detected as a wretched charlatan. But what was he doing beyond saving his own skin and grabbing at some plunder as a necessary part of the process? Yet Cæsar could have been criticised as doing no more than that; he had fought to save himself from political annihilation, and circumstances had forced him into his lonely seat of power. So Antonius argued, but could not convince himself; he knew he didn't possess the urge that had made ambition and constructiveness one in Cæsar. What was he to do then? Give way to a band of murderers who wanted only to set up their old game of place-seeking?

"Look to the end," he said, with unaccustomed mildness; for he liked Hirtius, and had no arrogance except when opposed or frightened. "Don't judge me, Aulus. I can't surrender to these murderers. I think that's the deepest thing I feel. But whatever I do, I'll never forget I once served Cæsar—and still serve him."

Hirtius was moved but not quite persuaded; he believed that Antonius was speaking the truth as he felt it, but he disliked Fulvia and Lucius. He nodded his head. "Heaven help us all, Marcus. I see dark days ahead." Then he went.

ANTONIUS turned to watch Fulvia enter. Once more he felt a fear that she would read his thoughts—or worse, that she

had heard his confession to Hirtius. But he drew himself up. Why should he care what she knew? How could her taunts hurt him? But something in her fixed purpose stirred, as always, an answering lust in himself. Why shouldn't he strive for power? Why shouldn't he own the earth and die drunk, a god like young Alexander? There was no need to torment his conscience because he wasn't full of administrative ideas like Cæsar. Someone else would have to rule things, or at least have the honours of first citizen, however much the constitution was re-established. He would at least be better than the others; he wouldn't allow the business classes or governors to sweat and bleed the poorer people and the provincials.

Fulvia took in the news by a glance at his face. "So Decimus has surrendered," she said. "The miserable coward."

"And there'll be hordes of veterans around the Senate," replied Antonius, warming to the game. "They'll scare the guts out of the weaklings. I'll get the Two Gauls for five years, and we're set up for life."

Fulvia felt a sharp stab of disappointment. She wanted more than provinces and income. Her emotion of emptiness angered her. Only a baby cried for the moon and then was satisfied with a rush-candle. She would do neither, she wouldn't weep for moon-lamps or be consoled by a flickering earth-light. What was the solution?

"Go and scare the Senate," she said. "That's the work for today, whatever tomorrow holds." Surely tomorrow would produce a prize worth aiming at, an apple of gold that was edible, a sensation like the flawless fire inside a gem. The thought jerked her eyes open, dilating the pupils. One could never own more than one's own body. Everything else was only an extension of the body, or food for it. Yet the loveliest dress, the richest food, the closest absorbing kiss, the clenching sweetness of power—they all faded, mutilating the flesh, not eternalising it. Perhaps Pisidice, her body still cool from mountain-waters, was nearer to something full and satisfying; but she too would lose it soon.

Antonius was feeling happier, concentrating on the task before him; and Fulvia forgot her stress as she watched his

almost boyish face, and felt towards him as she had felt towards the nuzzled baby. Then that too faded.

Messengers had been thronging the streets all night. Rome was buzzing with new life, a sullen but vital purpose. For a moment Antonius, pausing in mid-bustle of giving orders, felt the hum and tread of myriads about him; and he was at the heart of their gathering, and life was good for that moment.

ANTONIUS had chosen the Temple of Tellus for the session because it lay on the further side of the Forum from the Capitol, near his own house. The instructed mob had filled the Forum; bands of soldiers stood menacingly at every corner; pickets guarded every approach; about the Temple itself were ranks of well-drilled veterans, cheerily looking forward to demonstrations against any defenders of the murder. Antonius smiled securely at Lepidus as they walked down the short passage on the Esqueline slope leading to the Temple and the populous Subura beyond. The mob had filled every street and lane suffocatingly for miles round, and a deep-throated rumbling murmur filled the air.

Deeper Antonius felt his stirrings of anger against the conspirators. The people hailed him rapturously. He would give them their prey; they wanted to tear the Liberators limb from limb.

In the porch of the Earth-Goddess a few senators stood bleakly round, or stared at the large map of Italy on the wall with sightless eyes, listening to the increasing swell of voices and the trampling of feet. The map seemed hung there mockingly, inviting the revolutionaries to the parcelling-up of the big estates for pauper-colonists. The senators saluted with unwilling respect as Antonius, after making his sacrificial offering, passed through their ranks. Attendants were busy arranging the benches. Roar after roar announced the arrival of new senators. The populace, reinforced by all the veterans from miles round Rome, were taking no chances; they meant to intimidate each senator in turn. A particularly loud outburst of catcalls and howls greeted the prætor Cinna; and Dolabella, coming close behind, escaped with a mixture of insults and exhortations; no one

knew exactly what part he was playing. Entering the Temple, he boldly took the consular chair which a slave had fixed for him, and Antonius made no protest. Gradually the House filled. Tight-lipped, pallid, the senators, who had received urgent appeals from the Capitol throughout the night, nerved themselves to the ordeal of passing through the mob and taking their seats.

To Antonius they all seemed thoroughly cowed. He sat amused in his raised chair, thinking how easy it was to grasp power, how the senators would wriggle and weaken when he declared the resignation of Cisalpine Gaul by Decimus Brutus. In a brief speech he told the House that he had called the session to deliberate what course best suited the interests of the State. He meant to allow the senators full space in which to dishearten themselves by exposing their irresolution; then he would take charge and gain his ends. The murderers must be exiled: for excuse he would allege that nothing else could save them from the mob's frenzy. That would eliminate almost every able competitor.

But to his surprise the senators on whom he called, men who had never before shown a spark of courage, proposed that the session be adjourned till certain members of the House now detained by circumstances on the Capitol should be enabled to join in the deliberation. The proposal was tantamount to a pardon. Worse, the next speakers, encouraged by seeing the ground broken, launched into panegyrics of Brutus and Cassius. One, Tiberius Nero, even called them noble Tyrranicides and proposed rewards. The discussion changed into a debate whether rewards, praise, or mere immunity would meet the case. In astonished rage Antonius saw that the House was completely out of his control.

He sent messengers out to bid the crowd roar for the blood of the conspirators; he saw that the doors were left open so that the furious cries penetrated terrifyingly into the Temple. But still the senators persisted. For once they put aside their timidities; they felt only the ancient dignity of their Order, its tradition of aristocratic brotherhood. Had not that Order vindicated itself by striking down its destroyer, Cæsar? Who then could call it decadent? The excitement

of the last two days had ended by fusing the frightened Senate into a stubborn spirit of zeal. Let the mob howl. The louder the outcry in the streets became, the calmer and more scrupulously austere became the debate. The House was unanimous in supporting the Liberators.

Antoni^{us} saw the malicious grin on the small, dark, regularly modelled face of Dolabella, but had no emotion to spare for vendettas. He felt his strength ooze from him, leaving him weak and clammied in the chair. As if there were wounds in the soles of his feet, the energy which had been fermenting in his veins dripped slowly out, leaving his body a floundering husk. He could not have raised his hand to ward off a blow. To the ravens with Fulvia and her hot-brained schemes. The only possible course was to acquiesce and get out of the difficulty in the least compromised way. Both parties were mad.

Then he caught Dolabella's smiling glance again, and rage returned to give him strength. At least he would upset these talkers. They were now arguing that there was only one question before the House: either Cæsar was a tyrant or Brutus was an assassin; the answer was obvious.

Antoni^{us} rose and cut the speakers short. Words came to him easily, and for the first time he enjoyed addressing a formal meeting. Cut-and-dried definitions, he said, were for the schools; let the House look to consequences as of more practical interest. If Cæsar was a tyrant his body would have to be thrown into the Tiber with obloquy, and all his acts declared null and void; the State would resume all lands that he had granted or sold; all the officials that he had appointed, including Brutus and Cassius, would have their tenure cancelled; many of the present senators would lose their seats; the State, lacking all officials, would be in the utmost confusion.

At that moment there was a tremendous uproar outside. The news of the senatorial resistance had percolated through the crowd; and the senators, though determined not to abandon their fellows on the Capitol, blenched at the sound. After all, what Antoni^{us} said was right; the problem was not to vilify Cæsar but to extenuate the conspiracy and stabilise the State as quickly and simply as possible.

"Antonius! Lepidus!"

The noise grew louder. The speakers in the House could only be heard by those close at hand. The building seemed to rock. The clang of arms rang through the tumult. Antonius announced that he would go out, address the crowd, and calm them. Followed by Lepidus, he left the Temple, fretting at the thought of what would happen to the debate in his absence, but glad to reach the open air again.

"Marcus Antonius!"

The mob screamed with joy to see him, and he flushed with pride, though he could not forget the rebellious Senate at his rear. With the Senate lay the ultimate power; he could not believe otherwise; in the Senate alone was preserved, however tainted, the tradition of Rome. A noisy mob was no creator of empire; but he went, happily, with the tide of the flowing figures.

"To the Forum!"

IN the Senate Antonius had unwittingly left a strong ally in Dolabella. Dolabella, as he had already shown, cared little for party faith, though he preferred revolutionary measures. What he cared supremely for at the moment was the consulship. He saw at once that if Cæsar was declared a tyrant he would lose his rank, and his record would at once blacken him, for the victorious conservatives who would no longer need his support. Taking charge of the proceedings, he made it clear that if there was any suggestion of nullifying Cæsar's acts he would oppose all proposals to relieve the conspirators of their blood-guilt. It was ridiculous to talk of throwing Cæsar's body into the Tiber when the mob was roaring in the streets. How could Cæsar's acts be repudiated when the Liberators in the Capitol were at this moment circulating pamphlets to say that they struck only at Cæsar personally and meant to respect all his legislation?

He waved one of the sheets in the face of the Senate and succeeded at last in shaking their eagerness to clarify issues by denouncing Cæsar as a tyrant.

Cicero listened in despair. His legal mind saw the impasse of the situation: a point that no one had considered before

Cæsar's death. The last thing the conspirators wanted was to lose their appointments; their whole plan had aimed at using those appointments, Cæsar's work, to tide over the stressful period until fully normal functioning returned to the Republic. If utter confusion was created, who would profit by it more than the mob? How could elections be held in a city terrorised by armed soldiers? The results would be a foregone conclusion for the extreme revolutionists.

The Liberators were thus faced with a miserable dilemma. The only way to justify their act and bring about the state at which they aimed was to declare Cæsar a tyrant; yet to do this would be in effect to destroy the whole procedure and hand Rome over to the mob.

A senator, with a last effort to keep the original programme, suggested that all Cæsar's acts should be decreed null, and then at once passed anew under a different name by the Comitia. But Dolabella laughed.

"There is your Comitia." He pointed out towards the tumult.

The debate drifted weakly on. How could the dilemma be removed? Where was the formula of reconciliation?

Into the midst of the enfeebled Senate Antonius and Lepidus returned, brisk, with the air of men heartened by action. They had harangued the crowd and promised to see the popular will carried out, though they knew as little as their audience what precisely was meant by the promise; but the crowd was temporarily appeased, and Antonius was relieved to find that the Senate, so far from becoming more doctrinaire, was relapsing into dismay. But amid all its wavering it persisted adamantly, with a mulish vagueness, in the resolve to stand by the Liberators. Indeed that now was its only wish; it was ready to accept any compromise that would save Brutus and hold intact the senatorial order.

Cicero now spoke. He had wanted Cæsar defamed as tyrant, but saw that it would be suicidal to make that proposal. He spoke therefore for a truce. The great need was an end of hostilities; let Cæsar and his work stand; but let an amnesty be declared on the precedent adopted by the Athenians to close periods of political violence.

No proposal could have suited the mood of the House

better, though in fact it solved nothing except the problem of releasing the men on the Capitol—being a foreign form counter to both the letter and spirit of the Roman constitution. Cicero knew the weakness of the method; but what else would serve? As long as he could produce an open door whereby the Liberators might re-enter the State, the main end would be effected. But it was dangerous that the State had not declared the slain man to be a tyrant; it left the Liberators in the position of common cut-throats irrationally pardoned.

The Senate hurriedly passed Cicero's proposal. Their decree ratified all Cæsar's laws, both those already issued and those which might be found among his papers if properly drawn up and in accordance with the powers granted. To Antonius, in gratitude for his good work in keeping order, was left the task of sorting the papers. At the last moment a senator, reminded by the menacing clamour of the streets, added the amendment that all Cæsar's colonies should be duly carried out.

Then the House broke up, and the ordeal of the streets remained once more for the home-going senators.

BUT equally great was the ordeal that Antonius had to face in his magnificent house in the Carinæ, decorated with the trophies of Pompeius, hung with purple and embroidered cloths of the East, guarded at the doorway by ship-beaks captured from the Cilician pirates. Leaving his brothers in the cool Atrium, where delicately fronded ferns grew under the rain-hole, he walked into Fulvia's room.

She already had her tidings from a slave sent to watch, but she read them again from his pleading face. "So you failed," she said, curtly.

"Cæsar's papers have been left with me." He tried to assume a jovial air of matter-of-factness. "Quite a concession considering."

"Don't act the clown. You failed."

"I did my best."

"That's what my chairman said yesterday when he stumbled and made me bump my head. He had a boil on his neck and said it galled him. So I had him beaten."

Antonius felt a fierce anger against the complacent woman. "O to hell with you. You think dealing with the Senate is the same as giving your unfortunate slaves a bad time. No one could have done more than I did. And I'm glad at the way things turned out. I don't want more than my fair share. Everyone's willing to give me that. Why should I cause further trouble?"

She came up close to him, holding out her open arms. A burning film came over her dark eyes. "I've given myself to you. Every bit of me. And you've got to give me some return."

He laughed coarsely. "I've given you back as much as you gave. You know I smacked Cytheris and showed her the door. And there's been no one else. I'm faithful to you—and so I'll continue to be."

"It's not the same."

Her dark eyes embarrassed him; he loathed and desired her; the nearness of her made his palms sweat and tingle. She had been the wife of Clodius and Curio, his friends—though he had quarreled with Clodius over trying to kiss her—and both those friends had died bloody deaths. They had been the stormy-petrels of the generation; and she had married one after the other, and they died under the swords, and now she was his. In her flesh he felt the embraces of Clodius and Curio; she dominated him by the power of the dead; it was a filthy magic; he wouldn't have it.

She went on talking. "When a woman gives herself entirely, she gives more than a man could ever give. What do you feel when you take me? Do you feel that you're being torn to pieces? Do you feel that your flesh is possessed and given over to something you hate as well as desire? O you can't guess how it feels for a woman like me to give her body to a child—to become a breeding-slab. You throw off your lust, but I take it in; it remains to pang me and burn me. Do you hear?"

He stood stupefied. He felt ashamed for her, frightened that someone else had overheard her cry of suffering; he wanted to cover her mouth with his hand and say she lied, to laugh at her gaily, to insult her. He wanted to make her become the thing of shame that she confessed to be;

to possess her obscenely. He wanted to leave the room, but could not resist her.

"I hear," he said, grimly.

Yes, he heard; he swore to himself that he would never touch her again; he would give up women altogether.

There were tears in her strained eyes. "You've got to do something." She clenched her fists and they trembled pathetically. "You've got to fight. Do you hear?" Her voice grated insistently. "You mustn't let them get you down. You must stand up for yourself. I'll leave you if you don't. Do you hear?"

He bowed his head, to stop himself from crying out, imploring her to leave him; but at the same time he was scared she would catch that voice in his heart. The last thing he wanted was that she should catch it.

"Do you hear?"

"I hear."

He turned with slackened arms and walked out of the room.

STRIDING down the corridor, he tasted freedom as he had never tasted it before. He was damned if he'd stir another step in this futile battle of wits. Let the conspirators have their little crow. A man spewed over his drink, whatever his title was.

In the Atrium he paused to speak to a slave, and then rejoined his brothers. In a few moments another slave was cringing before him.

"So you're the chairman that was beaten yesterday for slipping."

The man cringed and nodded. "I couldn't help it, sir——"

"Shut up. I'm going to manumit you." Antonius turned to Gaius. "Here, you're a prætor. I free this man before you." He cuffed the slave. "There's your dismissal. Get out now. You're a free man."

The slave fell to the floor and kissed his feet. Antonius kicked him in the face. "Get out, I told you."

So that day passed, with noise among the people; and the upper classes grew more sure of themselves and even more convinced that Cæsar was only a dead man. The con-

spirators on the Capitol, hearing the Senate's decree, were thankful, and quickly ratified the terms; but they didn't like to venture down in haste from their refuge. Again they spent a chilling night among the statues; and in the morning they were formally summoned to descend. The baby-sons of Antonius and Lepidus were sent up as hostages (and only Antonius and Lucius knew how Fulvia had had to be held down on the bed while her son was taken away); and Brutus agreed to dine with Lepidus that evening, Cassius with Antonius.

All the news of the day Gallus heard from Cytheris. There was little reason for him to lie abed now, save that he felt weak. One thought kept him feverish; he did not like to admit to Cytheris that he owned only one nondescript slave and had no clean toga in his clothes-chest. But finally he had to send for Leonidas, his devoted but useless valet; and once he had started the subject, he took pleasure in exposing his poverty. He insisted on detailing at length how thinly he lived, how empty his purse, what a blow it was to have had his dinner-suit ruined.

Cytheris listened with a smile. She didn't mind what he talked about as long as it wasn't love; and soon now she would be able to get rid of him, but she liked him nevertheless: which surprised her as she sat being undressed by two slave-girls that night, for she had never merely liked anyone before. She had had no time for such a quietly luxurious emotion, she ruefully told herself—not that her career hadn't been lucky enough on the whole, lucky in comparison with that of others of her class. She would have been pleased to have the friendship of Gallus. But a woman such as she was couldn't have a friendship with a man; perhaps no woman could. There was something unspoiled about Gallus, for all his foolish ways; he didn't seem to want her to be loose so as to have her the easier for his own plucking.

She surprised herself further by giving the slave-girls some clothes that she hadn't really finished with; and then she lay awake in bed.

And Gallus also lay awake, and wondered what she would do if he tiptoed across to her room; and he rose and went to the door, but grew giddy and was glad to creep back to bed

"If he really wanted me, he would come in now," said Cytheris; and she knew that she would surrender if he came in, merely out of habit; and so she decided that he must go the next day.

"She will see that I am not as the others," thought Gallus. "I can't take advantage of her hospitality."

So neither slept, till near dawn; and awakening unrefreshed, they felt still shyer, yet enveloped in faint veils of a sweetness which they knew must shortly be dissipated. Both wished to say something pleasantly memorable, a phrase that would pin down the day in the cabinet of memory, a butterfly; but they feared the luminous powder of the wings would not endure their touch, and the moments fluttered past, intolerably sweet in a faint, despairing way.

Leonidas appeared; and his slight squint reduced Gallus to actualities. He sent him off to bring back the best, five-times-washed toga from the wardrobe, and refused the toga which Cytheris offered him. Then she grew confused, feeling that she must explain why she had such a garment in the house. She had worn it in some farcical parts on the stage; and Gallus smiled sadly, believing that the toga had been left by some lover, and she thought that he was thinking how the street-prostitutes wore the male gown, and that angered her.

Seeing that she was angry, he changed his mind, and agreed to take the toga; and she relented a little. But they squabbled over the soiled dinner-tunic. She wanted to have it cleaned for him, but that he wouldn't allow. After surrendering about the toga, he felt that he must be bitterly firm about the tunic. He declared that he would carry it to his own fullery; and she declared that he couldn't carry a parcel through the streets, he must at least leave it for his slave to collect. But he refused. So she gave him back the tunic, having her way to the extent of making him take it in a satchel of soft doe-skin.

Then she left him, and the maids came in with ewers of warm water and washed him with clouts of fine linen while he still lay abed. After that he arose and clad himself with the help of the maids in the clothes that Cytheris had brought; and he was overjoyed that there was a shift

smelling of a violet-scent that she used. As he drew the shift down and felt it lying with cool looseness against his newly washed body, he knew that he must possess her or be unhappy for ever. The knowledge made him keen to go; for while he was her guest, he saw that he would never say anything about love, but when he was no longer under any such obligation he would be able to speak.

So he went; and looking back from the doorway, he beheld her standing in the hall, a beam of gold from the skylight falling on her hair; but he could not see her face, for the light dazzled, though her hands moved in farewell; and then, dazzled and swaying, he stood on the pavement, and the door shut behind him.

THE first thought of Brutus on coming down from the Capitol was to reach Porcia. He never admitted to himself the existence of a sensual need, and therefore refused to admit wherein lay the suffering of the need he felt; but for the last fortnight he had not entered her bed because of the wounded thigh, and in the anxious burning of the blood as he gathered purpose towards the murder he had suffered from this abstinence and yet welcomed it. But now in the recoil from the deed he felt desire as he had never felt it before—desire only for Porcia, for her blessed calm, for the spiritual assurance of bodily contact with her.

Yet none of this he admitted to himself as he took her in his arms. After the three days' separation she looked strange to him, somehow not the person he had expected to see; and for the first time he noticed the profound distance of the blue flame in her eyes. He wanted to ask her if she was ill, but felt too ill himself, too full of a need of her care. But she seemed oblivious of that need in him, though she had been attending to him for the last few weeks as if he were a sick child.

"Were you worried?"

"No, no," she said. "I knew everything would be all right. I knew you would kill the tyrant, and then I heard that you'd killed him. And then I heard that you were on the Capitol, and I knew you'd come to me soon."

Brutus felt self-conscious at the naïve way she called Cæsar

the tyrant, though that was exactly the kind of reference he would himself make publicly. Also, he was aggrieved at the easy acceptance of his sufferings; he wasn't the ironlimbed hero that she was making of him; he was a sickhearted man straddling nobly his divided soul, and he wanted her to know it.

"I've had a terrible time," he began; then changed the subject. "How's your wound?"

"Perfectly all right." She spoke in a distrait voice, having no thought for herself.

He knew that her statement was incorrect, but wanted to salve his conscience by believing. "I'm so glad." He drew her towards the couch, feeling awkward and despicable, as if she was someone else's wife.

THE streets were crowded enough now. Gallus, used as he was to a Roman crowd, had to shove his way along. He had a fairly long walk to the Aventine; and gaining the Vicus Tuscus by an alley where some children were playing with a dead cat on a string and washing was stretched across the street from upper windows, he set off for the shop of *Fabullus and Ezra*. There were other fulleries nearer, but he wanted to see how Rome was taking the death of Cæsar, and also to have a few words with Amos, who had been the cause of his first going to the shop. He had been carrying a portfolio and a gust of wind had blown some papers out. It was near the Shrine of Hercules, and Amos, loitering among the merchants on the look-out for a chance encounter, had rescued the sheets and started a conversation. Gallus had liked the fervent lad. Amos at his request had told him tales of Jewish folklore and quoted passages from the Septuagint, the Greek version of his national Holy Book; then he had unashamedly asked Gallus for his custom: anything in the line of dyeing, cleaning, washing, or mending. They met occasionally and had a few drinks at a quiet tavern.

Now Gallus, fresh from the balm of the peaceful sick-bed in the house of Cytheris, seemed to be walking the streets of an unknown city; he felt he had never seen men and women before, never perceived the queer changes of emotion in their faces, the unchanging scrutiny of fear in their eyes,

the weight and roundness of their bodies, the animal-note of their voices. He and Cytheris belonged to a different breed; and his separateness in love made him see the others as they actually were. The spectacle was fascinating, disquieting. If they could read his thoughts, they would turn on him and rend him, as wild birds peck to death a bird escaped from captivity.

The provision-shops were open; but all the others were still barred and shuttered. No magistrates were sitting. The Salian Priests had ceased their spring-rites; yesterday they had been unable to make their procession to the Tiber, and they were a little uneasy, though they did not believe in Father Mars. For they were patricians, honorary priests. But while scepticism had grown usual among the upper classes, who held all the chief offices of the State religion, the populace were becoming yearly more affected by magicians claiming power over the stars and prophets with apocalyptic threats and promises.

Since Cæsar's murder all police supervision had lapsed, and there were parties drinking, brawling, dancing, in the main streets. Food-stalls had sprung up in spots where they were not allowed at ordinary times, and with them a host of wine-vendors. Wine was being sold from casks, barrows, or tables. Many tumblers, contortionists, fortune-tellers, balladists, patent-medicine salesmen, conjurers, exorcists, and religious fanatics had taken advantage of the large floating audiences. Harlots, disregarding the bye-laws, and dressed in yellow chemises, darted out of the lanes.

The streets were full of cries, and Gallus sorted them out as he passed along. The various phrases wove together somehow a congruous impression in his head, and he felt no contradiction in their differing appeals. They were all part of the merging madness of the world; and while he despised the world for being outside the circle of his love, he could feel the divergent passions and lunacies as awfully united in some surging impulse.

The pattern of the cries became in the blood of Gallus the urgent, oppressive enigma of life itself.

"Have your fortune told by your palm. Find out if Venus was your mother. Spare a copper for a man that

had his foot trodden on by an elephant in Africa. Guaranteed to cure bellyache, menstrual pains, and the evil eye. Repent and be saved. Pass me the dice. Kill all the usurers. Put an end to usury. Make room, citizens. Two more coins, and the famous Alcestis will do what you've never seen a woman do, she'll cross her feet over her shoulders under her chin and then stand on her head. For those that die without seeing God shall visit the bottomless pit of stench and flame. Shut up and have a drink. Cæsar died for us, I tell you."

The crowd was jolly, but very serious. Never had Gallus seen such a crowd. He sought to emerge from the loneliness of his surrender to love. He wanted to lose himself in the people, to discover the pervading emotion, to enter into the dark satisfying life of men grasped by a single great incomprehensible emotion—the unutterable life of faith. He failed; and yet he touched on something definite, the sense of a huge figure hovering over Rome, a comforting contact with power. No longer was he homeless or uncared for while that emotion persisted; no wonder the people found it a dole more sustaining than corn itself.

Here was the world-soul of the Stoics, he smiled to himself—though how would the Stoics reconcile this dark satisfaction with a belief in the absolute rationality of life? Here was a religion of the people, of the mud perhaps; it had nothing to do with a Communion of the Elect, the few who imagined that they peeled the layers off the flesh and got ultimately to a small round white kernel of transparent soul, an understandable God. The God of the people was not understandable, and yet he expressed himself in simple phrases—"Come and be saved. Be good or you will burn. Love me as you love yourself. Love all men as your brothers, except those who withstand me, and those you shall destroy."

Ah, the simple folk, they were tormented by no cleavage between the ideas of love and justice. God's love merely made them happy, and God's wrath merely made them afraid, and neither happiness nor fear did they question.

At last he reached the Aventine and the fullery of *Fabullus and Ezra*. Work was going on within, though the doors were

closed. Gallus knocked and was admitted by Ezra, who bowed, touching his brow and heart. Ezra, the father of Amos, was a Jew of liberal tendencies, though strict enough in his notion of what filial piety implied. Among intimates he would admit that the Law of Moses was not necessarily interpreted in a literal sense, and that even circumcision was less important than the offering of a pure heart to Yahwe; but such doctrines he did not avow in the Synagogue, where he quieted the tongue of scandal by punctilious worship and large-sized donations. He and his father and his father's father had been Greek-speaking Jews, and he had come from Alexandria; and though he knew Arimaic and spoke it with his fellow-religionists, he had forgotten the older Hebrew and read his Holy Book in the Greek.

He ushered Gallus in and took the tunic from the satchel, endeavouring not to sniff at its draggled state.

"I had an accident."

"Since all clothes become dirty in time," said Ezra, sagely, "God has made fulleries; and since there are fulleries, he has made it that all clothes become dirty in time; and those that say otherwise kick against the pricks."

Gallus wasn't sure if Ezra was laughing at him, but the man's face was solemn. Gallus looked about the fullery. In an alcove stood tubs in which boys were busy treading soiled clothes, and a broad vat in which two men were also jumping and then turning over the clothes with their toes. Other boys were soaking clothes in the alkali, plant-ash, which was sprinkled in the water. Beside the tubs stood bowls of urine for the same purpose. Nearby, washed clothes were hanging out on cords, and workmen were rubbing them with brushes, to restore the nap. At the further end of the hall men were sprinkling clothes and placing them on frames. Here the clothes were stretched, while from beneath there rose sulphur fumes out of pipes attached to a small portable oven. Near to the stretching-frame there stood the big iron press with two screws, in which finishing touches were given. Against the wall was thrown a heap of whitish clay, used to clarify the colour of the wool. The process of washing was strenuous, and togas did not long survive the rubbing and trampling; a dandy would wear

only the unwashed article, and after three or four treatments a garment was of small value.

"Treat it as gently as possible," said Gallus, eyeing his tunic with sudden fondness.

"Like a mother her first-born," replied Ezra, stroking his beard. "Well, master Gallus, my trade should be a flourishing one, for the world has befouled itself. Truly was it said, a man cannot take fire into his bosom and keep his clothes unsinged."

"Where's Amos?" asked Gallus; but he was interrupted by a man who lurched in through the half-opened door. Gallus did not know the man, but saw the brows of Ezra contracting with annoyance. The man was drunk. Hanging limply to the door, he looked round with a drunkard's mock-ferocity, his hair falling over his protruding eyes.

"Where's Ezra?" he called, though he was staring at the proprietor. "I've come to have it out with him at last. Where's the dirty Iudæan dog? Where's the circumcised grandson of a sow?"

"Here I stand," said Ezra, without indignation. "Say what you have to say, and depart. For not till April comes will you get another coin."

"It's not money I want, but justice," shouted the man. Then, dropping the pretence that he didn't see Ezra, he pointed at him. "Is this my works, or is it not?" He backed and pointed again, this time at the sign. "Fabullus it says, doesn't it? Insult me now by saying that I can't spell my own name. O the world's in a shameful way when a Roman's robbed in his own house and then insulted because of it." He pointed again, this time down the road. "They're all talking about their rights. I blush when I hear it. I can bear it no longer."

"Say what you have to say," replied Ezra, calmly, "and then depart."

"You're a cheating hog. Pay me something now, or I'll expose you. I'll bring the soldiers along and have you trodden on in your own vat. It's got to stop."

He tried to beat his fist into the palm of his other hand, missed, and swayed towards Gallus. Drawing back, he surveyed the stranger. "You're a Roman, aren't you?"

Anyway, you're not a Jew. You don't smell like one to me. Even when I can't smell cheese I can smell a Jew."

Stumbling across, he began to weep on the shoulder of Gallus. "I can't bear you witnessing my shame. I don't mind being cheated, but I can't bear the shame of it. Wherever I go, I hear people saying: There goes Fabullus that lent his name to a maggoty Jew—why can't he go on the dole like a decent man instead of having a Jew keep him?"

Ezra seized Fabullus, and suddenly assumed an expression of tempestuous rage. "Out you go! How dare you come molesting my clients?"

"O don't say that, Ezra," whined Fabullus, twisting in his grip. "Say *our* clients. It's our shop, isn't it?"

"You shall have no more money till it's due to you," answered Ezra, "because you'd only drink it if I gave it to you—as you'll drink it when I give it to you later. But later it will be due to you, and so then you shall have it, but not a day before. Out you go."

He flung Fabullus out into the road and then closed the door. Fabullus could be heard a few moments whimpering and scratching outside; then he went off, muttering.

"It was his workshop once," said Ezra, feeling some explanation was needed. "But he drank and gambled, and borrowed money from me, until he had borrowed more than the shop was worth. So I took the shop, as I had the right, for it was named as the security. Then I could have sent him away; but because he was known here, I let his name stay over the door, and I pay him so much every month—for which I earn curses from him and black looks at the Synagogue, men calling me a partner of the uncircumcised and saying that I break the Law. And many chachmamim have argued on that point, and not a small sum has it cost me one way or another to keep that name over the door, even now when it is of small use to me. But I am a man of my word, for he that breaks his word breaks the navel-string of the spirit. In Jerusalem there are merchants and dealers proud to place over the door the name of a priest or professor of the Law as their partner, and to him they give a portion of their earnings although in the shop he does no work at all. For such a payment is a ransom to the Lord.

Likewise do I pay a ransom, not to the Lord, but to the city in which I live; and while I am satisfied, all is well, for satisfied is no one else."

Amos was out. He roamed about much nowadays, said Ezra, pleased only when delivering parcels and taking a great time about it; but he could have his head for a short while yet, and then he must settle down to the trade. A good lad. No one could raise the nap on a lady's cloak better.

As Gallus reached the lower end of the street, he met Amos, but Amos with a surprising redness on his swarthy cheeks. Suggesting a drink at the nearest tavern, he found Amos full of obscurely joyous hints and self-congratulations, and finally got the straightforward fact. Amos had met a marvellous girl in an ironmonger's shop, or rather in the room upstairs, a most superior girl; and he owned a fine cloak, but had it wrapped up in the parcel that he didn't like to undo so near home, and it was a bit damp on account of being washed last night after everyone went to bed; and though the exhaust-pipe from the furnace and the clattering on the anvil made the room a trifle hot and noisy, the marvellous girl was so marvellous that she hadn't objected—the proof of which was that she was to meet him at the same place again tomorrow afternoon; and she had black hair and a straight nose and spikenard in her navel.

Amos had many other images with which to convey the girl's incredible nature; and Gallus grew interested. Had Amos himself invented the phrases? Amos wasn't quite sure; perhaps not all were original; after some pressure he admitted that he might have been quoting the words of a book of his people called *The Song of Songs*, of which there were many interpretations but only one entirely satisfactory application; but, of course, as Gallus hadn't seen Karni with his own eyes, he'd have to take the words of Amos as to that.

Gallus asked more about the ancient literature of the Jews, and Amos promised to learn some more passages; but he couldn't remember anything but *The Song of Songs* for the moment, and the Commandments and the Prohibitions and so on, but these latter sections weren't equally relevant;

still he'd read some more and have it ready for the next meeting.

They parted, Amos agreeing to call at the rooms of Gallus; and Gallus walked on. But as he turned the corner, he was aware of someone following close behind. Turning quickly, he found that the man was Fabullus.

Fabullus shuffled under his gaze, shut his eyes tightly, and blinked. Then he said, "I wasn't following you. Doesn't the street belong to me as much as you? But since we've met before, I think you ought to give me something to make up for the way my feelings were trampled on under your eyes. If you hadn't been there, I'd have cut that Jew's heart out and given it to the pigs. I let him throw me out through respect of a fellow-citizen who mightn't like to see a brawl. Can't you make me a loan? You go putting money in that Jew's hand by giving him clothes to wash, and I get nothing, and it's my place, I tell you, as it was my father's before me. By Dis, don't you think the shades of my family haunt me? If I need a drink or two, it's only because I can't sleep otherwise. I don't mind the loss, it's the disgrace that's killing me—having to take money from a Jew as if it was charity when he owes me everything he's got. You ought to see the way people look at me in the streets. People I don't know, too. Aren't you going to give me something?"

Gallus pushed a few coins into the man's hand and told him to stop talking; then he went on, leaving Fabullus to count the coins with a dribbling leer on his face. He thought that he'd rid himself of the man, and forgot all about him; but as he turned into Figtree Yard, where lay the entrance to his attic's stairs, he was aware again of a slouching presence at his back, and turned in time to see Fabullus retreating round the wall.

The sight gave him an unpleasant feeling of insecurity, of a world callously filled with foes and madmen; and he tried in vain to drive away the gloom that settled on his blood, a sense of darkness thronged with vampire-mouths. On the dark stairs he seemed fighting his way up through dim bat-presences of evil; and it was with relief that he saw the line of light under the familiar door and knew that his slave Leonidas would be within, disconsolately preparing a dish of peas and pulse.

TO HELL with Fulvia! Antonius was still resentfully shaken by her attitude. The more he considered the situation, the more advisable it appeared to cease fighting. No one would wish to harm him. He had his province of Macedonia for the next two years; surely it was best for the distracted State to have a lull? Only then would the overcharged, yet wearied conflict of forces find a solution. Cæsar hadn't solved the problem; how then was Antonius to do it, with no more lead than the goaded appetite of a fierce-hearted woman? The stout opposition of the senators, whom he had looked on as mere fair-weather politicians, had destroyed his optimism; and how could he lose the memory of Cæsar slaughtered by his friends? Never would he lose it. Ah god . . .

He forced himself to consider the chances. Say that he threw in his lot with the mob and roused them to final insurrection: what would happen? He would own Rome; but the senators would disperse and patch up treaties with Sextus Pompeius in Spain and Bassus in Syria—the remnants of the Pompeian armies. They would gain the whole of the rich resources of Asia; Africa would join them; the burghers of the Italian communities would be on their side. And even if Antonius started a bloody civil war all over the exhausted empire and won it, what a horrifying prospect. He would rule only as a merciless tyrant; he would have no executive class at his disposal; the Empire would split to pieces. Gaul would revolt; so would Spain; Parthia would invade Asia; the Jews would revolt; Dacians and other savages would come swarming down into Greece; the Germans would move once more. . . . Every Roman instinct in Antonius shrank from that picture of the dismembered Empire. Yet that was where Fulvia would drive him.

He was in this mood when a slave announced that two messengers from Queen Cleopatra wished to see him. He ceased striding about the room, put down his wet tankard on the top of a priceless citron-table, and, after a moment's thought, said, "Send them in." The deputation would at least take his mind away from its doubts; something was wanted by these agile Egyptians, of course; but they'd get nothing.

Sara entered, respectfully making short, ducking bows. Behind him came a youth in long cloak and mitella, bearing a small casket.

Two soldiers guarded them in. "They haven't been searched," said one of the soldiers as the group halted before Antonius.

Antonius gave the men a quick look, and grasped the youth. Holding him with an arm round the waist, he pushed him backwards and ran a hand rapidly over his body. The casket dropped on the floor. At the same moment the soldiers grabbed Sara and began searching him.

"It's all right," said Antonius, suddenly, dropping the youth, who staggered back, drawing the cloak closer about him. The soldiers left Sara, saluted, and retired from the room. Sara gave Antonius a knowing grin, ducked with another humped bow, and without a word went to the further end of the room, stopping at the curtained doorway through which the soldiers had gone.

"What is the reason for this visit, your Majesty?"

Cleopatra plucked at the string under her chin and lifted off the mitella, a flapped cap which came down over the cheeks. Her golden hair fell in waves on her shoulders. Throwing back her head to remove some stray tresses from her eyes, she approached Antonius.

"I wished to see you, and there was no other way."

"There was certainly no other way; and if my wife enters, you will perhaps doubt if it was a way at all."

"Is the consul Marcus Antonius so very much afraid of his wife?"

"He is. Afraid of being unfairly suspected."

Cleopatra came closer still and spoke quickly. "I want only my dues. You know that Cæsar agreed to the legitimisation of his son. He meant to have the legal details finished before he left for Parthia. I want justice, and no one can give it to me but you."

Antonius was in no mood to be beguiled by a woman. He took up the tankard and drank noisily. Let the fastidious Queen think him a Roman vulgarian, and be damned to her opinion!

"You wish me to bear false witness of some kind, I take

it—to please my wife perhaps, since she knows Cæsar gave no such instructions.”

“Yet I am speaking the truth, and you know it. He accepted the child as his. He was a just man. He would have completed that acceptance by a legalised statement.”

“Cæsar would have done exactly what suited him. But what is it you want me to do?”

“Only one thing can serve now. An adoption of the child by his will—or by a codicil to the will.”

“So it’s forgery you suggest.”

“You have been given the power by the Senate to deal with Cæsar’s papers. I suggest that you find among them what Cæsar would have wished you to find there.”

“And what do I get? Egypt . . . or another bastard that would need legitimisation?”

Cleopatra recoiled at the crudeness of the thrust. She paled and said nothing. Antonius, for all his wish to hurt, was in a fury at himself, but could only bluster on, “And what if someone else was already adopted?”

Having said that, he was in a worse fury for being lured into exposing his own ambitious hope—a hope so much repressed in his heart that he had blurted it thus unexpectedly. Now he would appear utterly ridiculous if Cæsar had not adopted him in the will.

Cleopatra said nothing, but he saw from the momentary gleam of her eyes that she had understood. She turned away. Something in the melancholy gesture revealed her beauty, the queenly carriage of her limbs, a powerful grace entirely itself in the moment of resignation. He stepped forward, unwilling that she should go with so bad an impression of his manners, and caught her hands where they were pressed together under her breasts in a fold of the cloak. She tugged her hands away; and the action, throwing her arms up and away suddenly from his grip, lifted the sleeveless sides of her pænula. The loose cloak swung back over her shoulders, hanging only by the section where it was sewn together under her chin.

He saw her glistening body, proudly arching away from him; then, with another single gesture, she stooped, reached up, and drew down the cloak again over her nakedness.

But it was more than Antonius could bear with its suggestions of what she had been willing to offer if he had listened more readily. Half-drunk, full of resentment against Fulvia, regretting his two years of fidelity, he felt a violent desire rise choking in the throat, tearing at his hands so that they closed and unclosed, darkening his eyes so that he could scarcely see. He took her in his arms.

"Let me go," she said in a tense whisper, commanding, without surprise or anger.

Antonius laughed, a deep throat-laugh, and crushed her back under his embrace. Her body collapsed against his, and he gripped her tightly across the small of the back.

But she spoke again, "Sara," still hardly raising her voice above a whisper. "Kill him, Sara."

Antonius looked up to see Sara close beside him, a thin dagger lifted in his hand. He dropped Cleopatra, who fell to the floor, and turned to face Sara, crouching like a wrestler, meaning to catch and break the man's arm at the first movement.

Cleopatra rose from the floor wearily. "That will do. Come now, Sara."

Sara grinned, lowered the dagger, and slipped it back into his left sandal, where a groove received its flat blade and handle. Then he humped his back, bowing first to Cleopatra and then to Antonius.

Antonius said nothing. He resisted his first impulse to call in the soldiers and have Sara whipped to death. At all costs Fulvia must hear nothing of what had happened.

Cleopatra tied down the mitella over her hair and wrapped the pænula about her. Then, followed by Sara, she walked from the room, her queenly walk again rousing Antonius against his will to a hungry admiration.

She was gone. Antonius felt the room queerly empty, himself somehow sadly poorer. But, noticing on the floor the small chest which she had carried in order to keep up the pretence of attending Sara, he relieved his feelings by kicking it under the couch. What did she mean by leaving evidence about to awaken the suspicions of Fulvia? Hadn't he something to think about better than Cæsar's numerous bastards?

Edepol! those days in Gaul had been good. Think of the

captive Gaulish women, big-hipped, sulky-mouthed, deep-breasted, their faces buried in a pillow of hair. He had been in Egypt too, in the army of Gabinius, in days when Cleopatra was hardly out of her nursery; and had drunk with flat-bodied Alexandria girls, eyes painted on their nipples; girls with long thin necks and swaying lily-heads, brown heads with square heavy mouths, a marmoset chained to their wrists. God, what a fine world it was. One day he had ridden with Cytheris in a chariot drawn by four tame lions into an Italian town. Ah, the merry eyes of Cytheris, and the gaping country-wives. He had bribed the priests of Venus at Pompeii to let him embrace Cytheris on the very altar of the goddess, and no Venus had appeared in the incense-glowing darkness, unless Cytheris herself had been sufficient Venus. Ah, what a fine world he had abandoned.

And all for Fulvia, for a woman who gave him no peace, mastering him because of the ghosts of Clodius and Curio—the gay adventurous lads who had died under the swords after possessing her—his own wild youth, gone in fretting schemes, in petty hatreds that could lead nowhere.

Miserably he strode up and down the room once more.

THE dinners of reconciliation took place without much success of amiability. Brutus was suffering; for the wound in Porcia's thigh had bled badly, and he felt guilty, though she had merely smiled, and said, "Dearest, what does it matter?" Reclining now at the table of Lepidus, he scowled at his half-sister Iunia, who passed in and out and sometimes sat on a chair nearby. Lepidus, though genuinely shocked at Cæsar's death, yet liked to be friendly with all the world and felt uncomfortable in the presence of his gloomy brother-in-law.

"I don't think you ought to have done it," he said. "But tears won't heal a wound that's a foot deep. Live and let live."

"You were in a fearful temper," said Iunia, accusingly.

"Not at all. I simply cursed. Why can't you sit still, woman? And don't betray your husband."

"He said he was going to do awful things to you," she persisted, turning to Brutus her large, restless, blue eyes.

Brutus frowned. Lepidus reached out for her, and she ran from the room.

"I can't manage women," said Lepidus. "I admit it. If I'm strong-handed, they bite me. If I'm kind, they laugh at me. Where's that woman gone now?"

He rose and hastened to look behind the screen, where Iunia smacked his face. He returned, red-cheeked and grumbling.

"Look here, Brutus, I'll divorce her, sister or no sister of yours, if ever I find her out again with that waster Veditius."

"Veditius has sound political views——" began Brutus, crumbling a piece of bread.

"Shall I go and pack up now?" called Iunia, from behind the screen.

"You'll do what you're told," replied Lepidus. "Behave yourself. The guests can't hear themselves talking through all these family scandals."

Brutus stirred, irritably. As he moved, a sinew in his thigh pulled and snapped, leaving a hot, numbed sensation. A gush of horror came over him: the sinew had snapped in exactly the same place as Porcia had stabbed herself, the place where Brutus had stabbed Cæsar. And Porcia had bled again this afternoon, bled under his touch.

"I've invited Veditius to dine with us tomorrow," remarked Iunia, still behind the screen.

CASSIUS was at the house of Antonius. The two men were little acquainted, but had a certain respect for one another as tried soldiers.

"Have you still a dagger under your armpit?" Antonius asked, remembering Sara, and smiling to think how none of those about him could guess his thoughts.

"Of course," replied Cassius. "For all aspirants to the tyranny. I trust that doesn't affect you.

He was feeling as nervous as Brutus, for his arrival home had been greeted by an hysterical outburst from Tertulla. She had called for her jewel-case as soon as Servilia left, and discovered that her pearl was missing; after interrogating the slaves, she had rightly blamed her husband, and waited in a raging temper for his release from the Capitol. He had forgotten all about the pearl, which had dropped from his Toga during the struggle in the Curia; and she refused to listen to his explanations. He must have acted out of malice;

what right had he to steal her property? He must have been jealous, listening to the filth of liars; she wouldn't bear his child; she'd stab herself in the navel with a bodkin and kill the brat.

She had indeed fallen into trembling convulsions, and he feared a miscarriage; but at last she had been carried weeping to bed.

So Cassius did not feel happy; and yet under the influence of the wine and the food he warmed towards Antonius. What a pity he didn't have such a hearty colleague, though Antonius was a rogue. For a moment the gorge of Cassius rose against all his own convictions, and he wanted to suggest that he and Antonius should join in a coup. The Empire must have its boundaries firmly established; Cæsar had been right enough about that. Let Antonius take over the West, while Cassius beat back his old enemies the Parthians. Rome needed a strong hand, a soldier's.

Then the complete unreason of such a suggestion startled him; he had killed Cæsar because he stood for those very aims. And Cassius, feeling press hard upon him the constitutional safeguards and complications that he had fought to preserve, sympathized overwhelmingly for the first and last time with the impatience of Cæsar. The old squabbles and rivalries would begin anew, and Cassius would never get the commands that he alone could use adequately. Already routine, the need for legal formulæ, had smudged all the clarity of the gesture of the Liberators.

Cassius threw off his emotion, looked on Antonius with hatred and suspicion, and begun to joke and jeer and encourage horseplay around the table.

A thoroughly good fellow, thought Antonius; he's more dangerous than I realised; he must be watched.

THUS a compromise was arranged, and the State restored to its old balance; and the work of Cæsar was as if it had never been. For not one member of the governing classes was concerned to break the arranged compromise, not even Antonius, lounging with a wine-cup and bellowing at the jokes of Cassius. Cæsar was dead.

VI

WHERE A TESTAMENT IS, THERE MUST ALSO OF NECESSITY BE THE DEATH OF THE TESTATOR

NEXT day, the 19th, the Senate met again, to confirm Cæsar's provincial appointments and his nominations for the chief offices at Rome for the next two years. The Liberators took their seats, and no one doubted that a stable settlement had at length been found. Nothing remained but to wear out the mob's lungs; and the last few decades had seen so many passing insurrections that no one now feared the mob's power to keep shouting beyond a point. The diehards had already decided to move a measure confiscating Cæsar's property; but this was thwarted by Piso, Calpurnia's father, who suggested that Cæsar's will should be opened and read, and that, since no condemnation had been passed against Cæsar, the Senate could not deny him the rights of even the humblest citizen.

But a more contentious point was whether Cæsar should have the public funeral usual for an illustrious man. It was hard for the diehards to oppose, since Cæsar, though struck down for exercising the powers of his dictatorship, could not be described as having exceeded the powers legally conferred upon him. The inherent contradictions of the amnesty were already appearing.

Cassius, however, strongly opposed the public funeral. In times of disorder nothing must be done to cause unrest; the question of Cæsar's services or disservices to the State did not arise.

It did not suit Antonius for the diehards to have their way wholly; and if he lost his grip on the veterans he would soon find himself jostled out of the area of importance. He consequently delivered a placatory speech, in which he stressed the dilemma of the position. Cæsar could not be

denied a funeral altogether; that would be as inflammatory an action as naming him tyrant. Yet any funeral he was given would be attended by the populace, who would be more riotous if they imagined Cæsar was being denied his dues even in death.

Finally, Antonius appealed to Brutus as a man of strong common sense and civic probity. Let Brutus decide.

Brutus declared that it would be unwise to annoy the people with prohibitions needlessly liable to look like insults to Cæsar. He agreed with the consul.

Antonius smiled. He had discovered how to defeat Cassius; he had only to appeal to Brutus.

The Senate voted that a public funeral be accorded to Cæsar.

THAT afternoon all the relations of Cæsar assembled at the house of Antonius. Calpurnia was there with her father; she had not wanted to come but could think of no excuse; she sat with her eyes fixed on the floor and never raised them. The Abbess of the Vestals had been asked to bring the will in person. Antonius refused to touch the will till the assembly was complete; then he asked all present to satisfy themselves as to the state of the bound and sealed tablets; then only did he break the seals and hand the will to a slave, a litteratus, who read out the contents.

Cæsar's three nephews were appointed his heirs. Gaius Octavius was given three-quarters of the property, Pinarius and Pedius were to share the remaining quarter. Provision was made for the birth of a son. (This it was that Calpurnia had been dreading; she was rigid with agony.) Several of the murderers were named as guardians of that unconceived child; Decimus Brutus, Antonius, and others were named as joint-legatees in case one of the nephews was unable to inherit. A vast legacy was left to the people: 300 sesterces to each citizen, and the large garden-estate beyond the Tiber with all its art-collections.

No mention yet of an adoption. Antonius listened with a feeling of heavy sadness. What did it all matter? Life had uttered itself magnificently in Cæsar, but that was all over now. That was the real property of Cæsar, and how could he bequeath it?

Give me your greatness, Cæsar.

The will ended. But the slave turned over the tablet-leaf and went on reading. There was a codicil. The nephew Gaius Octavius was adopted as a son.

Antonius set his teeth, and for one blinding moment knew the deepest disappointment he was ever to know. Yet he had hardly hoped. Only that taunt he had made to Cleopatra had surprised him with a revelation of how deeply something in him relied on those vague hints of Cæsar's—hints intended to rouse him to better service, no doubt; or had Cæsar really played for a while with the idea of adopting him?

Suddenly the thought came to Antonius. There was no hope for mankind, there was no loyalty in them. He had failed Cæsar; and if he would fail such a man, he was worthless. Everyone had failed. A sense of great opportunity lost passed desolatingly over his flesh. If one man—if he, Marcus Antonius—had given Cæsar absolute allegiance, it might have meant a new world; but Cæsar had died lonely, amid half-friends, half-enemies. Perhaps the murderers had paid him the greatest tribute; their moment of envying hate had been absolute. Had Cæsar understood it like that? Antonius prayed that he had; and for one pulse of enlightening misery he had a great fear of his own end, a great fear of facing the darkness with a life wasted wrongly and wrongly hoarded.

For that pulse of fear he stood under the statue in the Curia, not fighting at Cæsar's side as his heart longed to have fought but as Cæsar himself, brutally betrayed, struggling for sanity. Then the mist cleared and he saw the roomful of mourners; Fulvia regarding him with contemptuous curiosity and solicitude; Piso closing his eyes with decorous gravity; the two nephews with the lesser shares trying not to show any jealousy of the absent Octavius; Calpurnia rigid with dread that everyone was looking at her; Lucius fingering the scar on his cheek.

And the world was vile and infinitely desirable.

THE news of the will ran throughout Rome within an hour; and the people groaned and shouted as if they were themselves the beasts of love and rage that were devouring their hearts. But there was no outbreak; all attention was centred

on the promised funeral rites. A day of heated preparations passed, and then came the day of farewell. The spring Vacation, the Quinquatrus, had arrived; but work had already ceased, and nobody thought of the holidays except the schoolboys, who felt cheated, since the schools would have been shut anyhow. Why couldn't the riots happen in mid-term?

Not least glad was young Clodia, who had not the slightest interest in Cæsar. For she had obtained permission to visit her aunt Clodia; and Bhebeo (whose name, before she became a wet-nurse, had been Phœbe) accompanied her, instructed not to let her out of sight and to bring her back before prandium.

Clodia, the aunt, was at her villa on the other side of the river. She sat in a sunny arbour, looking on the flowing waters and the boys who bathed from a projection of the bank. Happy children, glossy with wet sunlight. She let the roll slip from her lap, and forgot the contentment she had been finding in the simple, difficult Greek of Heracleitos. What was left for an aging woman of her intelligence but study? Her days of loving were past; and she had seen other women of her class who couldn't realise the lesson of the years. They solaced themselves with their slaves, and very soon the slaves had a complete ascendancy, bullying them before visitors, humiliating them endlessly. No, any escape was better than that; even the study of the Greek philosophy was better. But it was hard to forget on such a morning, with the spectacle of wet young bodies naked on the other side of the flowers, and so much gold and silver in the air—the coinage that had currency only among the young. Only the young could exchange the yellow flowers and claim the accounting kiss.

Clodia was old, in the late forties, irretrievably old for a woman who wanted to suck dry the wine-flagon, or not drink at all. She had almost succumbed to wine a year ago, after she lost her last lover, a youth who had flattered her foolishly and then gone off with a freedgirl who had soft golden hair and no chin.

Yes, she was old. She resented even the brittle intellectual renewal of life that Heracleitos still found after many genera-

tions in the roll that she had been cuddling on her lap. She was as intelligent as any philosopher, and yet she would leave nothing—only a madcap daughter who would have a bad end, caught like a fornicating fly in honey. Clodia looked back into the past of her own lovers, not the men who had carved no face upon her memory, but Catullus and Cælius, one whom she had despised and one whom she had hated, and both whom she had loved. She loved them now, sadly, for they were dead; and Catullus had left her his poems, worshipping and libellous, and Cælius had died with a sardonic gesture of despair—for he had found himself dwarfed in Cæsar's world and had defied it, alone, straightforwardly, dying in the South as he called on the slaves and the outcast shepherds to revolt; he hadn't plotted murder in a corner.

Both these men were very close to Clodia as she lazed in the early spring sunlight, two men who had been good friends till she came between them. Then Catullus had been all claws, a cat of a poet, more of a woman than she was. He had always wanted her to kiss him, instead of being taken up by the pleasurable duty of bedding her within his caresses; and curiously, she remembered, she had always felt shy and frightened when she kissed, though kisses given by another never flurried her. Man to kiss, woman to be kissed. Yet Clodia had no kisses left, to give or to take; and the young boys splashed and dived in the tawny waters of the Tiber.

The moist smell of the earth was the smell of a grave.

She shuddered. It was the smell of decay about to break forth into blossom. She wanted the faith of Heracleitos, the acceptance of the endless flux, the breaking and the making, the loss and the renewal; and yet against that whirl and tangle of divine forms there stood the pitiable form of human individuality, unable to find solace in the contemplation of the universe and its beautifully impersonal patterns. What did that crying spectre desire? Could any lover stop the mouth of Clodia's kiss? She was old; therefore there must be a meaning and a contentment in age, if she could only see deep enough.

She looked up to see Tigidas coming down the garden path lined with roses. That annoyed her. He was an affected young poet, the latest lover of Metella since her divorce;

and Clodia was sure that he wanted Metella only because she was the daughter of the mistress of Catullus, for he imitated Catullus most patently. Indeed his only virtue was his avowal of the discipleship.

Looking now into the face of Tigidas, Clodia saw that he would try to kiss her, and she was inclined to surrender to him, to seek once more a contact with the engendering earth about her; but she knew she would be doing it chiefly out of pique against Metella and so would be sorry for it afterwards, and, marvelling at her self-control, she decided to snub Tigidas.

Yes, he settled down at her feet, and rested his folded arms on her knees, and rested his chin on his wrists, and stared up at her; but she took no notice. Then he raised himself and took her about the waist and kissed her; and again the spring burst within her in a clamour of wings, soft in the throat, warm in the nested loins; but, still marvelling at herself, she thrust him away and laughed at him.

"Why do you want to kiss me—an old woman?"

Tigidas was hurt at the suggestion that he could desire an old woman; more concerned to vindicate his own taste than to woo the woman he had embraced.

"After all," he said, sucking at his lip, "it would be something to be able to say that one had had the Lesbia of Catullus."

Clodia laughed again. "For being so rudely truthful you deserve to get me—but not quite. You can tell a lie instead and swear you had your Lesbia."

"It's not the same," he insisted. "And really I think you're a great woman."

Clodia picked up her roll. "Go inside. Metella will be back soon. She's choosing some new material." Silky texture of the skin thrilling beneath a lover's fingers. Let Metella have her day of softness; her skin also would sag and parch. Once more Clodia desired to take Tigidas; and if he had again embraced her, she would not have resisted. But it was too late. He rose, kicked at a grass-tuft, asked her the name of a flower, and went inside.

Clodia resumed her roll, determined to contemplate undesirously the elements, their coming and going, their crumbling and reassembling; perhaps in time she would find more satisfaction in that contemplation than in any

twining and untwining of lover's touch. It was all part of the same thing.

For a moment that thought gave her real satisfaction; she understood Heracleitos, his faith, not merely his words. She must take her studying seriously, arrange for Greek professors to call and discuss the philological points. . . .

So she watched the boys bathing, and the sunlight dripping from their backs and arms and legs had a new poignancy of silver. Then she saw that she was to have no escape today from interruption. Down the path came young Clodia, flutteringly attended by the fat Bhebeo. Clodia liked her niece, but wasn't sure if the presence of her young vitality wouldn't be too disturbing on this silvery day; she preferred to watch youth at a distance, beyond a barrier of flowers.

"Good day, aunt," said the girl, lifting her smooth oval face for a kiss. "O look at all those boys. I wish I could bathe with them; but I suppose they could tell I was a girl if I took my clothes off and joined them. They'd run away. Fancy that."

"They don't know you, my dear," said Clodia, wondering if she had talked like that in her early teens. "I daresay they wouldn't run from the little girls they know."

"O yes they would," said her niece, firmly. "But I'm not little any longer. I'm grown up. I asked Bhebeo to cut the hair under my armpits yesterday, and the soles of my feet itch in bed. Bhebeo says that means I'm going to have three husbands."

Bhebeo became confused and jabbered. "Don't repeat what I said when I didn't say it, or I'll tell your mother on you. I said the lines on your palm showed three husbands as plain as the ears on a donkey, but it's no use blaming me for what the Fates have written. I was only using the eyes that were put in my head."

Clodia was bored. What was she to do? She couldn't tell the girl to run away and play; Tcidas would probably try to kiss her, the feeble fellow. Then she had an idea. She would go and call on someone—but on whom? Her women friends all talked as inanely as the young girl herself, and she had no men friends on whom she could call unexpectedly—

and even if she still had such men friends, she couldn't have taken her niece to them. Then she had a second idea, an astonishing idea. She would call on Cicero. He had been bothering for months now through Atticus about buying the end-piece of the garden; he wanted to raise a monument to his dear dead Tullia, that stupid little adoring piece—no, a shrine, not a tombstone, he insisted on calling it. Clodia and he were old enemies—ever since he and Clodius began to fight, and he had insulted her outrageously in his speech defending Cælius against her prosecution. But that was old stuff now; she had prosecuted Cælius only out of blind hatred and perhaps she deserved what she got. It was in the past, anyway, a pre-war affair. She couldn't keep up antagonism on such a day, and Cicero would be so surprised to see her. He was wifeless now, so the visit was safe.

"We'll go calling together."

Young Clodia clapped her hands and jumped into the air. "O yes." Bhebeo opened her mouth, but the girl went on. "Now you know you can't object as long as I behave myself, and I will." Then, while Bhebeo was mustering objections, she turned slyly to Clodia and said: "Wait a moment. I want to go inside for a few moments with Bhebeo. Come on, Bhebeo, I can't wait."

She ran up the path, and Bhebeo followed, puffing angrily and expostulating to herself.

Clodia drowsed. She wasn't sure after all if it would be fun to see Cicero; he could be so pompous sometimes; he might take a lordly affronted attitude and turn her out. But she looked up to see young Clodia returning demurely down the path, and forgot about her misgivings.

"Where's that nurse of yours?"

"O she doesn't want to come along. She's got a headache. She's chatting with someone in the kitchen."

Clodia raised no objections, and walked round the side of the house, holding the girl's arm and denying herself any toilet preparations. She didn't want to allure, she the student of Heracleitos; yesterday she might have been unable to put aside thoughts of her face so blithely; but today death and life had the same face for her, almost. Probably Cicero wouldn't be at home anyway. Why bother?

CICERO's heart pounded when he heard Clodia's name announced. The picture that arose in his mind was Clodia of the flagrant eyes, the Medea of the Palatine, the savage shrew, the woman scorned and relentless: so she had looked when he denounced her in the law-court as the harlot of the seaside resorts, the trull of Rome's drinking-parties, the hostess who kept open bed. That was ten years ago; he had made things up with the Claudians after the death of her brother; but he had never exchanged more than a few formal salutations since then with Clodia. Had she come to tear his eyes out?

When he saw her with an arm about a young girl, he was sure that he had villainously guessed his fear of Publilia and was taking her revenge by forcing an interview; then he saw he didn't know the girl. Rousing himself from his lethargic meditation on the Republic, he advanced with strained politeness.

Clodia saw that she wasn't going to find any amusement; she felt only sorry for him, and that made her sorry for herself.

"A meeting of the ancients. Let us dodder together. I came to talk about that piece of my garden you've been negotiating about."

Cicero spread out his hands. "Of course I want it, but Atticus has been so slow in this matter. He keeps shifting between your ground and Scapula's. Of course I know how tight money is. Particularly since Cæsar's death. Indeed since then it's been unobtainable. I don't know what I'm going to do. Dolabella hasn't yet paid his January instalment of the dowry-returns. My son at the University in Athens wants money. I can't let him go round like a beggar. He's doing most brilliantly, I hear. And I owe Terentia money through the divorce. She's being most unreasonable. And then——" he faltered. "Then there's the other divorce money too. In fact everything's at a deadlock."

"Two divorces in two years!" laughed Clodia. "Yet I, the libertine lady, have neither divorced nor been divorced. My only husband died of a heart-attack."

Cicero was silent, remembering how he had hinted at the trial of Cælius that Clodia poisoned her husband. Clodia also

recalled his abuse and saw that she had blundered. She flushed deeply, and her eyes burned with their old vitriolic light. Her voice took on a throaty harshness. "So the doctors said—but people say anything if it pleases them, don't they, Marcus?"

Once he would have warmed with pleasure at being called Marcus by her; now the sneer in her voice confounded him. He didn't want personal enmities; why had she come out of the past? He mumbled.

"Let's put the dead years behind us. I always respected you—more than that—I mean, I never forgot—I've always thought you an extraordinary woman—duty as an advocate—once . . ." He stammered and made a hopeless gesture. "Once I thought all kinds of things. I thought I'd saved Rome. Then Cæsar came." But Cæsar had fallen; the rhetoric of Cicero would conquer yet. The sadness of human dissension in the face of the great need, the common mystery, overwhelmed him. Yes, he would conquer; and as part of that conquering he felt it necessary to impress, to subdue this troublesome woman, still stained with the remnants of her beauty.

He struck his hand passionately on the table. "Perhaps I have saved Rome after all. Cæsar is dead."

Young Clodia was watching him admiringly. Baffled by Clodia's silence, he looked round with hunted eyes and noticed the young girl, attracted by her pale fresh oval face, her eyebrows of virginal surprise. There was no resemblance to Tullia, but the girl was young, untouched by the miasma of age that was tainting all his aims and hopes. He indicated her with a query.

"My niece. Fulvia's girl."

"Of course."

Cicero opened his arms, and, taking young Clodia gently, kissed her on the forehead and on the mouth. He felt refreshed. Perhaps he had married to have a daughter again; a daughter's love was the best love; but what use for an old man nearing seventy to beget daughters, even if he could? He would die while they were in the cradle.

Young Clodia nestled against him, and he felt sweep over him the horrifying memory of Publilia, the realisation that

this girl also was alive, secretly, potently alive, warmly, hungrily. His flesh shrugged and winced with a reluctant stir of warmth: a distant warmth like music heard afar across waters, richly close in its echo in the blood.

He held the girl out at arm's length, forced himself to smile into her eyes, and backed away. Publilia had stolen his innocence. He would die unsatisfied, the world and his private affairs equally in disorder. Everything had become slovenly, slowed down; Cæsar's murder had dissipated its heroism in argument; a taint was over all.

Clodia's anger had faded. How could she hate this old man who lived in a world of words? After all, she had once or twice deliberated about poisoning Metellus; she had loathed him at times; and what was the difference between loathing and murder? No difference, except a fear of the risk involved in killing.

"So you don't care to come to any conclusion apart from Atticus?"

"I'm afraid not. As I said, I'd be without any ready cash at all if it wasn't for him. But I'll speak to him and try to hurry things up. I'd like to have that shrine built soon."

It would be something stable in a shaken world, a rose blossoming in the black winter. He was sure that in those months of tears and loneliness on the coast he had brought Tullia's spirit near. He had felt wings folded about him when he woke in the night; and then at morning his grief had been worse. Strange that such comfort should bosom him, the gift of a frail small ghost. His dear had died in childbirth, and now his head rested between her motherly breasts. He prayed to her at night. Her ghost was his heaven. She must have no tomb but a shrine.

Clodia saw his far-away gaze and rose to go. He awoke from his musing and felt something precious escaping out of his grasp; he didn't want Clodia to stay and yet he couldn't bear her to go.

"Here," he said, and picked up the first object that met his hand: a little ivory casket sculptured with birds, once Tullia's. He handed it to young Clodia. "Something to remember an old man by. Your father and I said hard things of one another. But hate has no meaning after death.

It makes me hopeful to know that now. As if all our struggles worked together for some final aim—realised only in death.” His death was a shrine to his dear.

“O thank you ever so much,” said the girl, peering excitedly into the empty box and shaking it.

“Good-bye,” said Cicero to Clodia, and he seemed to be farewelling the whole of his past life, with its hatreds and baser elements purged away. Surely the State would settle down now, and he would be allowed to pass the rest of his days in peaceful retirement? Watching Clodia go, he felt like a dead man standing on the threshold of the grave and watching with uncomprehending despair the mourners depart.

As Clodia stood in the Clivus Victoriæ waiting for her niece to enter the litter, she saw the huge crowd collected in the Forum and the streets below. A burst of interest invaded her mind, and she told the litter-men to go down as near to the Forum as they could.

As they descended the slope, the girl at her side became talkative, snuggling against her at the jolts. “I wonder if Bhebeo has got out of the privy yet?”

“But you said she was in the kitchen.”

“Of course I did, but I didn’t expect you to believe me. Where else could I have shut her in except that privy with the bolt outside the door? But there’s something more important I wanted to ask you. Do you know what a girl told me? I bet you couldn’t guess, though I suppose you know all about it. She said it was safe to go with a man if one sneezed afterwards.”

Clodia stroked the girl’s hair, drawn back from the forehead under a fillet. “It’s never safe to go with a man, my child.”

The girl snuggled closer. “But I think that’s right about the sneezing, don’t you? It sounds right.”

Clodia made no answer, absorbed in listening to the mutter of the mob.

THE Forum was thronged; every balcony, statue-pedestal, temple-base was packed with clinging figures. The people were talking of nothing but the Will, the great loving-kindness

of Cæsar: 300 sesterces each and those magnificent gardens. Each man felt that the gardens had been left specially for the outings of himself and his family.

The important members of the procession had already filled Cæsar's house; outside, sections were forming and taking up all the space between the door and the Rostra, where the Eulogy was to be delivered. After that the body was to be carried amid dirges to the Field of Mars, and there burned. Large bands, bearing trophies and the material for oblations, had been sent on ahead, to relieve the crush. Even so, it seemed to the harassed organisers impossible ever to make a passage for the bier through the heaving mass. Plays had been staged, tragedies calculated to work on the feelings of the people; and the arias for flute and voice had evoked a hushed religious response.

Antonius was standing beside the bier in the Regia. On him had devolved the task of delivering the Eulogy, and he was cursing his luck, sorry that he hadn't abetted the attempt to veto the funeral. Nobody had wanted the invidious task. Anything but complete praise of Cæsar would infuriate the mob; any attack on the murderers would mean complication and loss of prestige in the Senate. But Antonius could hardly escape the honour, and he now saw the disadvantages of having a foot in both camps. Outside the ranks of the murderers he had been the greatest friend of the dead man; and he alone had anything like a standing with both reactionaries and populace. He realised to the full the difficulties into which he had been landed by his manoeuvring; he would be ruined if he wasn't careful. Yesterday he had been very respectful in the Senate, reporting that there was nothing serious in Cæsar's papers; and the Senate had responded with benevolent thanks. Everything had been going nicely till he had been saddled with this Eulogy.

The corpse lay on its ivory bier, covered with a purple pall embroidered with gold. At its head on a trophy was hung the bloodied toga in which Cæsar had been slain. Around the bier, fidgiting, stood the magistrates chosen to bear it on their shoulders.

When would the signal to move be made? Thicker and more eagerly exasperated grew the mob.

A DEEP throe of religion had seized the motley populace of Rome. Something was stirring strangely in them, welding them finally to a unity of aspiration. All the races around the middle sea had gone to make that populace, feeding the city in emancipated slaves. With the Italian stock were now mingled Greeks, Spaniards, Gauls, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Jews, Dacians, Syrians, Persians. . . . There was no numbering the breeds; and it had been the despairing cry of the reformers that nothing could acclimatise this mob which had grown up at the heart of empire, fighting the upper classes who were still basically Italian in blood.

In the clash of peoples that Rome was dominating there had been many dispersions; and each race, torn from its familiar ways and forced into a rough standardisation, yet clung to disordered fragments of belief, praying to unfaithful gods, finding a new fervour in wooing the unknown faces. The Jews with tenacious and jealous worship of their tribal god Yahwe; the Persians and the peoples of Pontus and Commagene with their unconquered Mithras; the Babylonians with their astrology; the Greeks with their inquiry into the elements, their clean-limbed gods of light, their darker search for a redemption from the flesh; the Syrians with their star-gods; the Egyptians with Lord Osiris and tender Queen Isis, and their involved intense creed of immortality—these were some of the ingredients that had gone to make up the emotions that swayed and babbled in the Roman mob.

The nourishing source of those emotions were the Mysteries, religious groups with private chapels. They were everywhere, promising redemption. They offered saviour-gods who would comfort in life and raise up aloft after death. Oldest was the Orphic cult of the Greeks, luring with hope of freedom from the weary wheel of reincarnation and picturing for the unbeliever ghastly hells of bubbling mud. Similar emotions were roused in kindlier symbols of corn-harvests by the Eleusinian Shrine: the birth of the babe of might, and Venus arising from the sea-shell or her own genitals, and Dionysos the terrible redeemer of ecstasy, who gave his bleeding flesh to the saved. From farther east came the worship of the Great Mother and Attis; the Egyptian Trinity; the Syrian

Baal and Adonis, the Son Lord; the Kabiri of Samothrace; Mithras of fire; Sabazios, a savage Dionysos of Phrygia; Atargatis of Syria, the horned moon.

And mingled with these were garbled and twilight versions of philosophy, dreams of demiurges and lords of creation, sole sustaining gods and mediating sons, the begetting word of the Father and the Shining Son who led the pure of heart out of the night of flesh and temptation—while above the wriggling mass Stoicism tried to subdue mankind to a reasonable love of light and virtuous self-reliance.

But the mysteries were the core of this revolt of terror, this search for a new principle of self. They promised freedom from fate, from the stars in their ascensions and declensions, from the seven dread planetary world-rulers, the seven Women Fates, and the seven Other Gods with the faces of black bulls wearing golden crowns. They gave sacraments of communion with the divine, quieted uneasy consciences with words of balm and with indulgences, baptized in water and in blood, and gave the great release and binding fear of the confessional. To the shrines of Fortuna, the birth-goddess, and Asclepios, the loving Healer, great hosts of pilgrims, anxious, suffering, diseased, managed to roam despite the troubled social conditions.

Now all the emotions of hope and thwarted love in the hearts of the Roman populace, narrowing the needs of their fellows throughout the Empire, had turned with yearning towards the corpse of Cæsar; for he had died that they might live. The world was looking for a Messiah, a Saviour, Ta'eb, Christos, or Soter; and all felt that they had found him in Cæsar. Broken memories of ancient rites recalled them to the knowledge that the King must die for his people and that it is imperative he should die not of sickness or of age, but violently, bestially. Memories of rites when the human scapegoat was forced to take the King's part and act his rule through a short festival, even to the enjoying of his wives and concubines (for thus he entered finally into the blood-rôle of the King), feasted and adored, and then cruelly put to death. Memories of eastern versions derived from the Babylonian Sacæa; the Jewish crucifixion of Jesus Bar-Abbas, the Son of God, the mock-king; the Jewish hanging of

Haman at the Purim, in place of redeemed Mordecai; the slave-king of the Saturnalia, still sometimes slain in remoter country districts.

A hubbub, a deep growling note overlaid by a thin piercing bird-note, filled the city. Never had such menace sounded in a mob-tumult. The burghers shrank in their houses and wandered from room to room inspecting the bolts and shutters.

CLODIA felt the emotion of the mob penetrating her like a strong sickly drug, covering her with goose-flesh. She wanted to go back to the lane where she had left the litter after bidding her niece not to stir out of its cushions. But she could not retreat; she had to go on. Standing still, with her hand grasping her left breast, she listened to the voices, the infinitely interwoven threads of emotion: the human mass given the god-voice of a beast.

She was in an alien land, not in the Rome that her proud Claudian forefathers had devoted themselves to create. For the first time she realised that all these people had existences in their own right, that they weren't merely menials caught in a huge process working only to satisfy her requirements. Somewhere in this repellent mob-emotion there was the wail of a new-born individuality.

Yet why should she fear? It was for this mob that her brother Clodius had struggled. They had loved him; and when he had been killed on the highroad they had burned his body here in the Forum, eight years ago. She had been out of Rome at the time and had not seen the pyre, which ended by burning down the Senate House. Suddenly she was carried away by the mob-emotion, laughing gleefully, chuckling in her throat in an insane way. She wanted the mob to burn Cæsar in the Forum too, to make an even greater blaze.

That would somehow glorify her also; for she was the sister of Clodius, the forerunner of Cæsar in creating this dark intense mob-exultation, this new focalising of power.

THERE was a way out after all. Antonius called to an attendant and demanded feverishly that he should somehow

make his way back to the Carinæ and return with the papers he would find on the top of the cupboard in the study. In these papers were copies of the decrees passed in January by the Senate to confirm all Cæsar's dignity and to add more; the decrees in which the Senate affirmed its loyalty by oath and recited at length Cæsar's services to the State. No one could object if Antonius had those decrees read from the Rostra. The wording was not his, but the Senate's. It was the perfect way to escape from the responsibility of eulogising Cæsar before this dangerously roused mob. The mob would be pleased by the high-sounding array of titles; they would be enraged by having once more brought to their notice the treason of the conspirators; yet the Senate could hardly censure Antonius for having had its own unrepealed decrees read aloud.

Antonius had been looking at the decrees as he sorted out some of Cæsar's papers before leaving the house. They had passed out of his head, and then the inspiration had come as he looked at Cæsar's dead face.

But would the man get through in time? Antonius waited with sinking heart.

The signal came for the procession to start. The magistrates raised the bier. Antonius strode out at their head. As he emerged into the open, greeted by a stupendous shout from the people, he felt something thrust into his hand. It was the roll, offered by the sweating attendant. Grasping the papyrus Antonius moved on with easy confidence, his handsome face grave and imperious; and behind him came the body of Cæsar.

AFTER the shout there rose a low keening cry, sustained till Clodia felt her ear-drums would break. It was a frightful cry, more frightful than any shrieks could have been. Slowly the bier passed on, rocking slightly at the ceremoniously regular tread of the bearers. Flutes piped a shrill monotone; and over the low tautening keen there came screams and thin wails. Clodia was trembling. She felt as she had felt when deep at night in her Palatine house she had woken to hear plangent cries and music from the Temple of the Great Goddess near-by. The hymnal rhythm of the poem *Attis* by

Catullus throbbed wildly in her head. O great poet, and you died because I could not give you my body.

“Rejoice, for our troubles are over. Come bow to her will.
Toss off the rags of delay, and run on her hill—
Cybele’s Phrygian home, her Phrygian glooms,
where the cymbal clangs and the timbrel shivers and booms,
and the Phrygian blows on his heavy curved pipes of reed,
and the ivy-crowned mænads, tossing their heads, pay heed,
and they shake the holy things with a piercing cry,
and still the devoted host goes driven by. . . .”
And the band moaned glory with trembling lips and sang—

Truly there was a joy behind the keening wail, a hope too finely drawn out of anguish to distinguish itself as yet, an ecstasy of deliverance.

Clodia, who had borne a child, felt her body at that moment of absolute weakness which was triumph, which was the birth of the alien hidden self, the new life.

Deliver me, O Mother.

Clodia sobbed. She felt the beat of Catullus against her body, his lips blindly seeking for her breasts. He was blind and still hungry for her body, and he had died because of her. She shrieked in her pain and misery, her fear of the hungry dead; and her shriek was swallowed up in the ocean of noise hemming her round. She wanted to beat her breast, but the crush was too strong. The crowd rocked and swayed with every movement of the bier: as if the bier was a cradle, as if the same great hand rested upon the bier and every member of the crowd. A cradling hand.

Clodia was fainting. She would fall to the ground and be trodden to death, for the crowd was exalted beyond all human considerations. In its agony of pity it would tread upon her and never know that she had fallen. The world circled blackly overhead and sweat started out on her brow, hot with thorns and then icy, but she was saved by the close pressure. She was held upright by the men who pushed unawares against her, their hearts uplifted by the spectacle of the passing bier.

O to put time back, to feel the lips of Catullus again on hers. Why had she been so futilely cruel? Till now she had

hidden from herself. All those insulting poems that he had written after their quarrel had made her take a cool, hard attitude towards his memory; she had needed to protect herself against the pricking comments of friends. But her heart had hungered. Before this huge revelation of yearning she could not keep up pretences.

She wanted to cry out: O people, why are we all so cruel? why do we kill those we love? why can we only know love through loss? But it would have been no use. The cry of suffering obliterated all voices and defeated any words that wisdom could utter. She knew at last the agony of an overflowing heart that amid thousands can turn to no one. There is only one pain, she knew now, and that is not to be able to give oneself, not to be able to share one's heart; and the richest hearts of all die choked by their own overbrimming wealth, for no one can take what they offer. So Catullus had died, ravished with bitterness. So Cæsar had died, forsaken. What then kept her alive, an aging woman who fought to cling to a body that no longer had meaning? She could give it to no one, not though a thousand men took it. She had lost her mate, the only man who could take what she had to offer; and she would die with a curse on her lips.

She cursed and blasphemed foully, racking her brains for every obscene phrase she had ever heard; but her blasphemous cries were lost in the great sob of noise, lost as her words of wisdom would have been lost.

ON went the bier. The crowd had difficulty in drawing back, but somehow they cleared sufficient way for the revered dead. Into the Forum went the procession, under the Arch of Fabius at the head of the Sacred Way, past the Temple of the Twin Brothers and the line of Tabernæ Veteres, towards the Rostra. A verse from one of the plays just acted, a tragedy by Pacuvius, had imprinted itself on the mob's fancy: "The men he saved were those who murdered him." Now it came vehemently back to their minds, it rustled from their mouths in spreading whispers, it roared into a chorus.

"The men he saved were those who murdered him."

Cæsar had trusted. A few months ago he had disbanded his Spanish guard, saying that it was better to die without

fear than to live afraid. He had trusted, and his corpse showed what reply his mercy had brought.

Antonius ascended the Rostra. There was a sighing hush as all strained forward to hear him. Without a word he indicated the Crier who stood at his side, and the man stepped to the opening in the rail and began reading. "Decree of the Senate. . . ."

The crowd could not follow for a moment, then they grasped the point. Nothing could have come better as a commentary on the verse they had been shouting. Here were the very words decreed and sworn to by the men who had murdered Cæsar and who now wished to destroy his work. They punctuated every pause with groans and yells; and when the catalogue of titles and the oaths of the Senators were ended, they sang again.

"The men he saved were those who murdered him."

It was like a response in a liturgical service, a mass recited over the present body of the god. The carriers had placed the bier inside a gilded tabernacle raised in front of the Rostra, a model of Cæsar's Temple to Mothering Venus; and the utterances of the Crier and the responses of the crowd surged and ebbed over this chapel of death.

Now there was another pause. Antonius saw that he must say something.

"Romans," he said, his tall, noble figure drawing every eye of the crowd admiringly. "My heart is grieving like yours. You have heard the deeds and honours of Cæsar recited. I have nothing to add to that list. I have only my personal grief, as you have. He was my friend, and now he lies there, taken from me."

He pointed to the bier in its chapel of gold, and the uproar broke out afresh. Now there was no order about the noise. Everyone was shouting different advices, abuse of the murderers, praise of Cæsar, wild prayers and wordless ullulations. The magistrates lifted the bier again; but the press this time did not part. Why should the people march out to the Fields, vacating the city and leaving it to the murderers? Cæsar had been lord and protector of Rome. Let Rome have his ashes—yes, even though the whole city burned as his pyre. What did laws against pyres or interments

within the walls matter? Cæsar was the law embodied. He was Rome.

"Burn him here!" cried Clodia; and the man next to her took up the cry.

"Burn him here like we burned Clodius!"

Clodia was startled to hear the name of her brother shouted so loudly against her ear. It frightened her, as if she had been recognised, as if every member of that vast assembly would turn to gaze at her.

"Yes, yes," she sobbed, and clasped the man who had shouted. "Burn him here."

The man turned and saw that she was not unpleasing, though over-old for his tastes; but there was something striking about her, an aroma of fine cosmetics that he couldn't place. Anyhow, her heart was sound. He clasped her back, and kissed her, and then shouted louder than ever.

"Burn him here!"

The demand had arisen on all sides. Some shouted that the corpse should be burned in the Temple of Iuppiter the Best and Greatest, the most sacred spot in Rome. Others suggested the Curia where he had been killed, but that was too far away. Why not in the Forum, the busy centre of daily life? What could suit Cæsar better than the Forum?

"Burn him here!" resounded the cry.

Men tore at the shutters of the houses around the square, broke into the temples and basilicas for benches, tribunals, and desks, raided the offices and shops, searching for anything inflammable. Somehow a space had been cleared in the centre of the Forum and the bier placed there. Most of the crowd remembered the day when they had burned their dead champion Clodius, and they longed to see the flames again rise heavenwards from the stones of the Forum, carrying aloft in their chariot the spirit of an even greater champion. Soon beneath and around the bier was piled a mountainous collection of wooden objects, broken furniture, batons, doors. Torches appeared and were handed from man to man, until they were dashed into the mass. Flames crackled and spread crawling up toward the crest of the heap where lay Cæsar on his ivory bier.

Veterans, inspired by the mounting blaze, snatched out

their weapons and flung them towards the pyre, watching the gleaming whizz through the air, the hiss as the metal stabbed into the vicious beasts of quarreling flame. A few weapons missed and wounded spectators, but no one cared, not even the wounded. They sucked the blood and danced wildly round. The musicians and players caught up their instruments and threw them after the swords; tore off the robes which had once been part of Cæsar's triumphal displays, and fed the blaze. Women, seeing the sacrificed robes, dragged off their outer garments and added them to the fuel. Dancing, screaming, the mob rushed round the pyre, catching hands, leaping, embracing, tumbling over.

Antonius had withdrawn and gone off behind the Græcostasis. For a few moments he had exulted in the tumult, and then had hated it. Moreover, he would be blamed, since he had been the presiding magistrate. Gathering as many as possible of the more sober-minded veterans he retired by side-streets towards the Carinæ.

Dusk was coming on, and the flames were brighter. Now the fire had reached to the bier, and the ivory was cracking. Men dashed up with jars of ointment plundered from shops nearby. The jars were hurled on the pyre, where they burst against the wood, splashing and rippling alight. A great gust leapt upwards, over the bier, sweeping away the bloodied toga from its trophy-stand, flapping and consuming it. The cloth bellied out like a flag for a moment, then tore and fluttered in rags of flame. Fragments were tossed about in the thick coil of smoke that swung and wrenched overhead. The sound of the fire was of a pounding cataract that poured upwards.

The body of Cæsar was wrapt in flame, then the mantle and the cerecloths tattered away. The flame writhed and hissed about the limbs like a host of bright serpents, eating hungrily of the flesh. The body seemed to lift, to twist, to be making an effort to stand upright. Then another gust obscured it with a pall of fiery smoke, and the bier crashed into the white-gold heart of flame.

A flurry of white smoke rushed out, curling and sweeping upwards like a flock of white birds. Doves of Venus, the maternal goddess of Cæsar, fluttered around the dark eagle, the great wings heavenwards beating.

O THE glory of a storm of fire. Fire that purifies, ravaging away all rust and dampness of decay, all the blights and insects, the flies of evil, the witches and their plagues. Fire that strengthens and feeds, softening from the cruel beaks into the gentle drift of fostering sunlight. Warmth of the breast, warmth of the mating-bed. Fire into which victims had to be flung at the sacred moments, the fire-festivals of spring and midsummer and autumn, or when special attacks of pest and malignity called for a need-fire.

Dance, all you worshippers of Cæsar. You and your fathers have known the sacred fire in the fields, into which the victims were consigned, and across the embers of which you yourselves leaped, to be cleaned and strengthened in womb or testicles, to leave behind your fleas and your sins. You burned the witch, the wicked sower, the green wolf, the old man of the straw, the goat-redeemer, the serpents of dark earth that, burning, become the forked serpents of stinging flame. You watched in awe the great pyres of Sandan or the monstrous wickerwork-idols in which the prisoners burned in Gaul. You burned the reaper of the last swathe or the man who drew the blackened piece of oat-cake; or you roasted a cat alive, an offering, an organic representation of the clawing cat of fire, the fever-beast, the colic-cat that tears the belly.

O great and glorious are the memories.

Dance about the giant of flame. For now Cæsar is the flame itself, not merely a god burning. He is all that burns and fructifies. He has passed into elemental power.

THEY danced and clung to one another, breaking into the taverns for wine, hugging one another under the porticoes where the shadows of the pillars danced and gibbered in flickering silence, as if parodying the huddled human gestures. Luridly the flames lighted the square. Cæsar's body was consumed, but still the worshippers sought for wood to keep the blaze going. The sweat ran streaming down their bodies. So many pulled off the last of their clothes and threw them after the wood. The world was being reborn. It had already died the death of water. Now it must die the death of fire. Man had died and been saved out of the womb of water, the

drowning spaces of birth. Now he must die through flame and be reborn in the consuming chamber of the Sun, the cherishing power of the Father.

They chanted ribald songs, dancing in rings round the pyre, lords of the earth and its fullness for this evening of apotheosis.

CLODIA drew herself up painfully from the ground. Suddenly she was tired and knew herself for the old woman she was. She would be ill, very ill and bruised. Yet it had been worth it, though she could not understand what had happened. She felt her shoulder sting where the man had bitten it. She was soiled beyond the ugliest dream of debauch, and yet elated. She had become one with her dead brother, and somehow that quieted the uneasy ghost who lived in her flesh, Catullus.

Staggering and clutching at the poor remnants of her dress, she was glad of the darkness outside the glare cast by the fire of the Forum. After much effort she remembered where she was and where she had left the litter. Probably the slaves would have run away, and her young niece would be terrified out of her wits. A thought stabbed her. If the girl was lost or injured, she would never forgive herself. The earth belonged to the young, not to aching bones.

At last she found the litter. Two of the slaves were gone, and the other two were drinking from a stolen jar of wine. They lolled up on to their feet as they recognised Clodia, grinning weakly; but she could not see their faces in the gloom.

Fumbling furiously at the curtains, she looked inside and saw with a passionate sense of gratitude that her niece was there—crying too, as Clodia had expected.

"Don't cry, my dear," said Clodia. "I'm so sorry, but I'm back after all."

Young Clodia threw herself on her aunt's bosom. "I've been trying to sneeze for an hour," she said, "and I can't. O please do help me."

NIGHT deepened, its stars veiled in the smoke of earth.

In the mysteries, after fasting and flagellations, many men saw the figures of the gods moving in a great light, dazzling and changing before the blinded eye of worship. Many

who had thus seen God were among the dancers in the Forum. God was no far-away thought to them. When initiated, they knew that they were gods in embryo themselves, only separated by a thin bar of flesh from birth into eternity. They had seen God face to face—God that was man in his suffering and his passion, man that was God in the resurrection. They had all hearkened to the good-tidings.

Was it strange then that they saw in Cæsar a protector become divine by the stroke of death?

Men fell down on the paving-stones and were filled with the gift of tongues and spoke alarming prophecies and evangels. One man threw himself into the flames. Image and interpretation of Cæsar's death was all that they had learned of the suffering god, the god terribly put to death, the god resurrected and bearing away the burden of the flesh.

They saw him enthroned in the fire, a merciful judge and father; and they sank babbling on their knees.

THROUGH the darkness were walking two men, arm-in-arm, attended each by a sturdy slave. They were two patricians who had come out, dressed in cheap cloaks, to watch the riot. They were sad, for they felt that their world was at an end; and they discussed the frightening inrush of oriental ideas and practices into the State.

The lean man threw back his head and looked up at the skies. A few stars could be seen at the thinning edge of the smoke-pall, southwards. He thought of the scene in the Forum, and quoted a line from the poet Lucretius, the great poet, barely ten years dead.

"To such enormities religion leads."

"It isn't religion," persisted his friend. "It's the slave's craving for a master and a patron. Lack of food produces dreams of everlasting life."

"It's vileness. All emotion is vile, and religion stirs the depths of emotion."

"But what of patriotism, friendship, love of parents and children—aren't they emotion?"

"They are emotion, but in them we see the self trying to escape emotion and live by the justice and mercy of understanding. In perfect understanding there is no emotion."

"God is nature. Why these people are vile is because they seek a good beyond nature. They wish to destroy the balance and economy of the universe."

"If God is nature, we do not need the word God. Nature will suffice."

"But what on earth has this lust for immortality and redemption to do with religion? Isn't religion the need to preserve the State intact, to live a good life? How can either of these needs function in purity if man is troubled by nightmares and ecstasies from the vacuum of the beyond?"

"We agree that the spectacle is vile. The discipline of family life cannot survive this pandering to such souls. Well, my friend, we witness the end of civilisation. Let us go home and sleep peacefully as befits men that know everything is divine—sleeping as well as waking, evil as well as good."

"It will all come right in the end. All things tend towards the good."

"Good and evil are eternal—and eternally the same. Good night."

At first the populace were absorbed by the rapture of dancing about the flames, as they had danced in the mystery-rites about the worshipper on his throne of initiation; but knots of them now broke away, talking angrily in the lanes. Then, shouting, these groups swept off through the city, looking for victims to offer to the god of their deliverance. They met a tribune named Cinna and tore him to pieces without waiting to distinguish him from Cinna the prætor. They sought out the houses of the conspirators and launched attacks. But the attacks were without plan or organisation, and the barricaded houses were successfully defended. Other groups began looting. Before dawn Antonius set to work with his band of reliable soldiers, sent round detachments, arrested rioters who were disturbing the peace, and summarily flung them over the Tarpeian Rock. Something must be done to clear him from the charge of complicity.

But he made no effort to interfere with the throng of worshippers in the Forum. The pyre was still burning. It burned all the next day.

THE DIVINE CÆSAR

VII

THERE IS A LULL

ON the day after the funeral, while the pyre was still burning, Gallus walked through the Forum. He was interested in the events going on about him but without seeking to evaluate them. He gave his blessing to the rioters as he would have given it to a police-force stamping out the riot. It was sufficient that men were active, carried away frankly by their needs. All their needs were equally fantastic to him; for only the body of Cytheris was real—her body and the strange delightful things that were part of her body, her gay smile with its touch of pathos, her lazy grace, her beautifully modulated voice, the small curls of her hidden hair.

In the Forum the crowd did not diminish; for more people came to take the place of those who went. Women came leading their children, to cast ornaments into the fire. The children, bidden by their mothers, cast in their bullæ, the charms worn round the neck by both girl and boy—a tiny phallic image inside a capsule of gold or wood. Some freedmen of Cæsar's had arrived and were trying to salvage Cæsar's remains from the bonfire, raking away some ashes from the flame-heart to place in a funeral urn. There was a large group of Jews at the corner where Gallus stood, and they were chattering loudly in Greek and Aramaic. Cæsar they looked on as a special benefactor because he had restored to Iudæa the port of Ioppa.

Gallus felt a touch on his arm and found Amos at his side. "What are they talking about?" he asked.

"Some say that Cæsar was the Redeemer," answered Amos, at once assuming a voice of loud disputatiousness. "But Nachum, him that you see there with the spittle on his beard, he says that the Redeemer will be called Ben Joseph

and will, moreover, lie unburied in the streets of Jerusalem. But Ephraim, that's the one with the hair growing out of his ears, he says that the Messiah will be known only by one sign—that he will be an iron broom to sweep the corruption from Israel and the world, and therefore why shouldn't he be Cæsar? But Amran, the one with his front teeth missing, says that the Messiah died long ago, coming as King Hiskia."

Amos stared round with wild eyes, ready for a challenge. "But they're all wrong. Would you believe they could be so cross-grained when the truth is written by Isaiah who says that butter and honey shall he eat, whereby he may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Gallus shrugged his shoulders, for he knew no need of saviours, being in love. "Come and have a drink with me, and tell me more about your Karni."

Amos screwed up his eyes and pursed his lips in warning that secrets must not be spoken lightly in earshot of possible betrayers; and together they walked off to a wine-bar. Finding Gallus a sympathetic audience, Amos began to weep over his wine and assert that his life was blighted; for he loved Karni and would never be able to marry her. For the girl was a slave, a superior and talented slave, the slave of a Queen, but still a slave; and Ezra would never buy her for Amos, which would be the most satisfactory arrangement all round.

Gallus was touched, and offered to speak to Ezra on the subject: at which Amos became panicked and extorted a promise of silence both in this life and the next. No, he would have to acquiesce in losing Karni, although she had dove's eyes in her tresses, and lips like a thread of scarlet.

"But," he remarked, in consolation, "a woman eats her fill, and wipes her lips with the back of her hand, and says that she has not sinned. So the man that puts his happiness in the care of one of them is like him that tries to stick out the eye of a raven on the wing."

Nevertheless Amos suggested that he would greatly appreciate a small loan, because the cost of renting a room for his beloved was fast ruining him; and a few days ago he had been waylaid by a brutal Ethiopian who had robbed him of nine denars and then swallowed them out of mere spite.

SURELY Cytheris couldn't object to having the lent toga and sachel returned. Gallus, leaving Amos, went hopefully on his way. She was at home; and the janitor, still somewhat distrustful, admitted him after a pause.

"O but I meant you to keep those things," said Cytheris, so calm and self-possessed that it seemed impossible a kiss had ever disordered her braided hair.

Her words sounded as if she hadn't meant him to come back, and he blushed and stammered. But she hadn't meant to hurt him; and feeling more secure in herself now that he had left the house, she went on to say how glad she was to see him. So he blushed and stammered more than ever, but happily this time, though he had quite forgotten his plan of taking her resolutely in his arms as soon as they were alone. Then they had nothing to say to one another; and she sat patiently waiting for him to go; and he wondered how a woman could preserve such a blissful calm, a repose that did not need to utter itself in words, while the need to say something was tugging at his mind with such wretched distraction that, having a world of things to say, he could say nothing.

At last he said, "I've never enjoyed anything so much as I enjoyed that recitation of yours the other night."

"Did you?" she asked, with an air of mild concern.

"No, no," he cried, bitterly. "I hated it. I mean it was too genuine. It hit me in the navel. It was unfair, somehow . . ."

"It was only a recitation," she said, with the same surprised depreciation. "The technique was a rather worn-out imitation of an old eunuch called Mardis who taught me when I was young. A wonderful actor of women's parts he was. I was only copying him."

Gallus knew she wasn't telling the truth; she had put herself, or at least one poor harrowed part of herself, into the miming. But how could he contradict her? He saw that her defences against him were too strong; she didn't mean to let him come any closer. He rose in depression.

She saw his misery and felt that she had nothing to fear from him. She liked him more, impersonally, though she despised him a little; and she didn't want to lose him altogether.

"Why don't you bring me something you've written?"

"Would you really like to see some of my verses?" he asked, with new hope.

She smiled, careful not to give too much away. "Don't forget it's my business. I'm a trained reader of verses. Perhaps I could do something to help you—and myself. I might be able to recite a poem. Let me see some of them. They mightn't be suitable, of course—I mean not suitable for my type of acting. I haven't much technique."

She was sorry for her offer. No doubt the poems were worthless and she would have him worrying her ceaselessly now.

"I'll bring you something along in the next few days," said Gallus, stiffly, overjoyed and yet somewhat hurt. He bowed and left the room.

She sat still for a long while after he had gone. He left her dissatisfied, made her want to lead a different life; and she would soon be penniless if she let herself be affected by what a third-rate poet thought of her.

THE riots grew worse. Antonius issued a strongly-worded edict forbidding the wearing of all arms within the walls, but made no attempt to enforce it. He was at his wit's end how to appear innocent before the Senate without offending the veterans. Again attacks were made on the houses of the conspirators and beaten off with difficulty; and he would have to do something if this continued. But more painful than his efforts to evade the responsibilities of the situation were his efforts to evade Fulvia. During the day he kept his brothers with him and continued organising a police-band of the more reliable veterans: but at night he had to meet her alone. He bedded in a separate room, but she came to him there. She lay beside him, and, fighting him off, demanded that he should act decisively.

"What can I do? I'd stop these riots if I could. They'll only hasten the reaction. Mob-outbursts have always ended with a victory for the diehards."

"All the more reason why you should step in first."

"Show me what can be done, and I'll do it."

"They've beaten you. You're a coward."

What hurt him most was the feeling that she spoke the truth.

But he didn't see what he could do. The failure to save Cæsar had broken his nerve; he should have run into the Curia; one steadfast opponent would have scared the conspirators from Cæsar, given time for a defence to rally. How could he find a solution in action now when the whole situation was vitiated by that cowardice? Cæsar was the man, and Cæsar was dead. Anger at Fulvia jerked into anger at the mob that was causing all the trouble. If only he had a strong force, he'd soon scatter and kill them.

"You shan't kiss me."

She fought like a cat, kicking and scratching him, nothing but bony edges and sharp nails, until at length she tired out; and then there was no satisfaction in possessing her. He fought and clutched only because he wouldn't have her think he was frightened of her. Then he felt more frightened than before. If she kept on much longer, he would do something mad—turn the mob on to the Senate, or clean out the Forum with his bodyguard. His will was crumbling, falling into the maelstrom of Fulvia's tainted blood.

He drank all the while, and the cloud of evil thickened about him.

DARKNESS too was clothing the world of Brutus. He was imprisoned in his house; and through the day and night he heard the jeers and threats of passing bands of insurrectionists. Attackers battered drunkenly at the front walls; but there was little to fear unless the populace set fire to the house. So far they had not dared to do this, since fires were so risky at Rome; the whole block, perhaps the whole district, would be burned. The mob lacked leadership.

But what distressed Brutus most was the wound in Porcia's thigh. It continued to bleed, no matter how careful he was; and Porcia continued to say, "But, darling, what does it matter?" in her wandering, distant voice. He wanted to sleep in another room, but she wouldn't have it. When he made the suggestion, she broke down and cried. But the moment he agreed not to go, she became once more, in a flash, her untouched self, surrounded with a kind of numbed radiance. He tried to press behind that appearance, to question her, but failed to find anything definite, and, disquieted, he gave

over the attempt to probe. There was at least an alluringly shameful peace in succumbing to her, in pretending, as she did, that it did not matter at all when her thigh bled.

What other refuge could he find from the mob shouting and banging outside, the thoughts dissonantly hammering within his head? Her bosom was broad, and only in her arms could he forget the world and the disquieting child-like trust of her eyes.

A GREAT poem! It should be the easiest thing in the world to write, with such a stimulus. Gallus sat for hours with stylus in hand, looking at his tablets, and writing nothing. Then he rummaged through his old manuscripts, threw them aside, read them again, picked out half a dozen passable poems, decided they were really rather brilliant, weeded them out one by one till he had discarded them all, and then tried again to write something new, the perfect testament of love.

Leonidas, his slave, watched him with concern. "Is there anything I can do for you?" he asked, with large-minded assurance.

Gallus shook his head. "I want a woman, my good Leonidas. The only woman on earth. Fetch her if it's in your power, for I fear it's beyond me."

Leonidas pondered this statement for a long while, comprehending only the first portion; but the need being so simple, he couldn't perceive why Gallus didn't gratify it. At last he went downstairs and returned prodding on ahead the daughter of the auctioneer's assistant who lodged in the floor below—a girl ready to supplement her family's resources in a modest way, as Leonidas had already ascertained.

"She's not the best on earth," he confessed, "but she's not the worst either, though it's myself that says it."

"Of course I'm not," said the girl with a toss of black hair. "Even if my father does work for an auctioneer. That's not my fault." She bridled, conscious of the universal hatred of auctioneers, the sellers of bankrupt goods, as only lesser rogues than usurers. "I've got an amber-necklace downstairs, too, though I didn't have time to put it on—this fellow of yours called me out so loudly, I thought someone had had an accident."

"Give her some coppers and throw her out," said Gallus, turning away and looking out of the small glassless window at some frail lambkin clouds in the blue.

Leonidas persuaded the girl to leave after she had said what she thought of both master and slave; but Gallus wasn't interested. He didn't even want to laugh. He stopped his ears with his thumbs and stared on out of the window, trying to dream himself into a pastoral Eidyllion by pretending that he was shepherd of the fleecy clouds. He was pleased anyhow by the act of shutting out the world and its women. Cytheris lived elsewhere, in an apple garden immeasurably far away, muslined with the sun's fabrics, dancing tirelessly under the fruit of gold on the gnarled, laden boughs. She was the rhythm that he could never quite forget and never quite express. And Dolabella had lain between her breasts, her apple breasts, Dolabella and scores of other well-mannered louts.

Leonidas, who had returned after pushing the girl down the stairs, sweated to see the agonised pallor of his master's face. He expected violent abuse for his blunder. But Gallus had already forgotten about the girl. He beat his head with his knuckles, and began once more searching through the manuscripts.

Relieved, Leonidas crept back to his corner and with a sense of duty done gave up his mind to the great daily question: would he buy some black pudding (made out of pig's guts), pig's trotters, or swine sausages for dinner. His chief regret in life was that he didn't have a cooking apparatus big enough to take a sheep's head; for he considered that the greatest dainty known to man, particularly if served with eyes intact and caper sauce—"sheep-droppings sauce" he called it when explaining why the small tight round buds of the caper tree were intended by nature to accompany the flesh of lamb.

THEN the pyre burned out at last, and the mob dispersed. Leaderless, it had lived only as part of the flames, and its ardour faded into the embers and ashes of the consumed Cæsar. The city slowly returned to normal existence, stretching weary, wakened limbs, uncertain and yet filled with a vague incredulous lightness of spirit. The proletarians lurked

once more in their dives and tenements, satiated; and the burghers asked themselves what it was that they had feared. The mob was a mist vanishing with the first rays of civic sunlight.

The Liberators stirred miserably behind their barricades. It was impossible that the mob had ceased to be. The imprisoned men allowed a passage to be cleared for messengers or visitors, but refused to believe themselves safe. They kept guards posted and sent scouts to patrol the streets. More and more senators and capitalists departed from Rome for their country-houses. Hirtius had gone. Lepidus was grumbling, badgered by Iunia for having opposed Brutus. Near the end of March Cimber and Decimus Brutus set out for their provinces, marching hastily with strong guards through the streets before dawn.

But there was no move from the populace. They seemed exhausted by their outburst, orgiastically drained of emotion and energy. Antonius waited for the counter-coup of the Conservatives. Surely it would not be long in coming now; and when it came, it would be decisive. There were a few meetings of the curtailed Senate, and he was careful to act as an ultra-constitutionalist. He supported a measure to annul privileges and immunities conferred by Cæsar, and himself proposed that the office of Dictator be abolished—erased from the constitution.

Then he went home to bluster and drink, while Fulvia jeered at him before his brothers or lay in sulking contempt at his side through the night-hours. Once when she beat at him and threw a small table at his head, it was almost a relief. He could bear anything but her cranky silence in those hours when he lay sourly sobering and the unintelligibility of the world was a clot of blackness eddying in his brain, an accusing question which he could never answer because it was never formulated.

He was determined on one thing. He would not wreck the State at Fulvia's whim.

THE eagerness to finish a poem in order to have an excuse to visit Cytheris again prevented Gallus from any concentration. He spoiled his scribbling-tables by ploughing deep into the

boxwood; when he tried to write, the steel-point scraped over the wax and jarred on the furrows. He threw the tablets out of the window and wrote on paper, though that was too expensive for him and he spilt the ink in the bed. But no inspiration came. His mind was cramped; all words seemed thin, with the colour dried out of them; Cytheris with her supple curves had turned all words into the merest of counters. At last, in despair, he took the best of his old work, a narrative of Phædra's love for her chaste stepson, and, stopping himself from looking at it and its insufficiencies, he dashed along the streets. He knew that if he glanced at a single line, he would read on and condemn the poem, tear it up, and have no excuse for calling.

Cytheris was out.

He lounged in and out of some wine-bars nearby, feeling the sweat from his palm soak into the paper, and still refusing to look. Then he returned and found to his joy that Cytheris was now at home. He produced the poem, apologised that he hadn't been able to write anything fresh, and offered her the manuscript.

"It was written before I knew you. I must write something different."

Cytheris read through the poem, dawdling to delay the moment when she would have to meet his eyes again. She read it all through scrupulously, though the first two lines told her all she needed to know. The poem wasn't bad; it wasn't even original enough for that; it was merely flatly ordinary. She was disappointed and yet pleased. Now she would be able to turn him away with an easy conscience; and yet dimly she was aware that she had expected something genuinely fine. But what would it have meant if she had discovered him a real poet? A man's character didn't change because he wrote well or badly, though good or bad writing would be part of his character. She ought to be able to tell whether she cared for Gallus without seeing his poetry first.

There was no need for her to delay. He had seen from her manner at once what she was thinking; but he stood there, rooted in contemplation of her quietness, her head slightly moving as the eyes travelled over the roll.

She could put off no longer the moment of looking up. She looked up, with no notion what she could say. But she was saved from having to say anything. His eyes read and answered hers.

She saw the tears pressing out from under his lids, and was deeply sorry. But what could she do? The scene was slightly ridiculous.

He rushed from the room, and she was glad to be no longer compelled to witness his mortification; but no sooner had she closed her eyes, as if to shut out the image of his weak appeal, than he rushed back again, his hair ruffled, his toga slipping from his shoulders.

"Will you give me a kiss? A single kiss? Then I'll be able to write something."

This was even more ridiculous, and yet not without its childish charm. She smiled with a slight nod, and lifted up her face, feeling herself the child as she involuntarily parted her lips in a half-pout. He bent over, kissing her passive mouth. Suddenly her pity warmed. If he had taken her in his arms, she would have given herself; but he was thinking only of the poem he was going to write in order to gain the embrace she was offering without the poem.

Without another word he rushed again from the room; and she knew somehow that she loved him, but that no happiness would come out of their love. Otherwise he would have taken her when she wanted him.

TERRIBLE were the sins that afflicted Amos as he walked to his trysting-place. He had been unable to look his father in the eyes; food choked in his throat dustily; and when Rachel trod on his sore toe he had not kicked her, for he took the pain as a judgment. In his worry he had dropped one of the sabbath-chests wrapped in straw to keep food hot for the day when no cooking or other toil must be entered upon; and he had broken the chest. Things were almost as bad as if he had eaten of pig-flesh or the flesh of vultures. Surely he had made himself abominable with a creeping thing. For he had taken Karni in his arms while she was still in the forbidden days of her separation.

He was beginning to think that she had a dæmon in her.

How could she be so shameless otherwise? His father was broad-minded but would never have countenanced a breach of that part of the law. Surely not. It wasn't a part of the law that Amos liked to question him about. Anyway, Rachel wasn't allowed to stir the soup or fetch running water on certain days; his mother, that quiet, thin-breasted person, was past her climacteric, and anyhow no one ever noticed her. Amos felt himself the greatest criminal in Rome. Yet he was revisiting Karni; he couldn't keep away; and when she laughed at him, he became as reckless as she was, and didn't care if a thunderbolt did split him in half like a gutted fish. But surely if there was to be any splitting it should be Karni who was split; for a fish was the symbol of Venus, as sailors had explained to Amos, and it was Karni who tempted him first. Therefore, if there was any justice (which there indubitably was), Karni would be split and he would be left to witness to the unerring aim of the Lord in searching out the wrongdoer.

"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," he quoted to himself, "and it searches all the inmost parts of the belly."

That was an unpleasant thought. It would haunt him all the while he embraced Karni. He would feel the candle lighting him up within, searching out his wickedness, lashing at him with its tongue of flame, stabbing him in the rear. What a pity Karni was wicked or that it was wicked to be Karni. He had lost all interest even in his yellow cloak or the scandal about the Egyptian household that Karni would tell him. She saw everything; she seemed to sleep with her eye to a door-crack.

But the worst part of it all was that he felt an overpowering wish to confess. Sooner or later he would stop someone in the street and blab the whole story; and what would happen if he picked on a man who knew Ezra or the elders of the Synagogue?

YOUNG Clodia was in disgrace, and Bhebeo was packing for the retirement to the country. The girl, finding that tears had no effect except to make her eyes sore, considered the bending nurse, resisted the impulse to push her over into the pile of clothes, and decided instead to rebel against her

mother's orders. There was only one way to make rebellion effective, and that was to run away. She went to the cupboard where she kept a number of odds and ends, took out Cicero's gift-box, peeped inside to make sure that all her wealth (ten denars and a Syrian coin with a hole in it) was still secreted there, and then with a grimace at her back-turned nurse walked out of the house by the side-gate.

She walked about for half an hour, going round more or less in a circle, and then concluded that she had walked at least ten or twenty miles. That was sufficient. The next thing was to find lodgings. She made inquiries at a baker's shop and was suspiciously directed to a block opposite; and there the caretaker, unable to place her well-fed airs and finely woven dress, grudgingly rented her a small back room on the second floor. In the next room was a woman with five children, and the partition was only boarding as thick as Clodia's sandal-soles. Her own room possessed, besides cobwebs and dust, a rickety bed, a shelf, a box, and a cracked bedside utensil. It smelt of decaying fried fish, garlic, and cheese; and had no window. She could get all the light she wanted, the caretaker pointed out, by burning candles or by leaving the door open.

Clodia spent another half-hour plugging the rat-holes with pieces of cloth torn from the bed-coverlet, and eventually found more holes. Otherwise she liked the room very much, particularly after she discovered a hole through which she could spy on the family next door. Then she put her dress on inside out to hide the embroidery at which the caretaker had stared; and as the cloth still looked too rich, she rubbed some dust on it, sneezed, sat on the bed, and began to cry.

After that she felt hungry, and went out to find some food, unaware that her cheeks bore dusty tear-smears. She bought a sausage and ate it in the street, surrounded by small children who told her that she was a greedy pig. Then she realised that she had no money left, having been cheated out of her change by the sausage-merchant and having left the Syrian coin under the pillow in her room to make the bed more homely. So she knew she'd have to earn some more money. She'd already decided how.

She walked along the street; but all the men she saw were horrid-looking. She had never noticed how many horrid-looking men there were in the world. In fact it was a most disconcerting discovery; for she had always thought that all men were kind and handsome and cheerful, except of course for the very old ones. Now she found they were all either grimy or bristly or fat or bony, and none of them had the kind of face it would be pleasant to wake up with. This was a terrifying discovery. It shattered all her plans and illusions; and it was only because of her fear of the small children that she kept herself from sitting down on the pavement and crying. She knew the children would pull her hair and call her cry-baby. Anything was better than that.

At last she saw a young man that she almost liked. It would never do to lose him. She ran towards him, calling out. He stopped and looked around, staring at the windows and balconies of the first floors. Having reached him successfully, she stood breathless and forgot what to say, sorry her embroidery wasn't showing.

"Anything I can do for you?" He felt stupid, a trifle heated with wine. Not a bad-looking girl.

"Yes." She found her tongue. "Please do come home with me. There's nothing but rat's holes in my room, and I hate it. I loathe it. I detest it. But I won't be sent to the country. I won't. O nobody loves me."

The youth took her hand. The appeal was unusual, but it flattered him. "I'll soon settle those rats for you."

She moved off to lead him to her room, and found that she had forgotten where it was. At that she broke down and wept in his arms. "Take me back to my proper home. My name's Clodia. I live at the House of Pompeius in the Carinæ."

He stared at her. "Not the consul's house?"

"Yes, yes," she said, impatiently, still weeping. "Take me home to my mother."

It was all too ridiculous. Cytheris realised with a start that she had refused entry to all her visitors for over a week now—ever since the day when Gallus came staggering in. What had she done with her time? She was astonished and

wanted to find out how she had managed to live—she who was usually bored unless she had at least one party every evening to visit. Yet she hadn't been bored. She had been dreaming, going over the past and yet not being hurt by the memories. The days blurred with a dim sweetness, and she knew that she had been waiting all the while for Gallus to come and take her.

The thought roused her to action. It was too ridiculous. She couldn't be in love with a young fool who didn't even dare to touch her. Twice she had been ready to surrender—the night before he left the house, and the day when he kissed her—and he hadn't known it. Well, he'd get no more chances. There was only one way to banish him properly, and that was to admit her visitors, to find a party somewhere.

She spent that night with a young noble who collected murrhine cups and had a household of slim negresses. He could tell the quality of the cups by smelling them; and as soon as the slaves coarsened, he sold them or put them out to his country estate to breed slim daughters. He had a flawless taste in Greek music and discoursed to her on the spiritual meaning of the various modes and instruments, enlarging on the amorous subtleties of the Phrygian mode, illustrating his theme with selections played by an orchestra hidden behind the hangings, and with apposite caresses.

She came home next morning feeling that she had at last obliterated Gallus; but as she entered the hall of her house, a worried janitor informed her, "He's in there waiting for you. I couldn't keep him out, mistress, as you didn't give me leave to use force."

She didn't need to ask whom the janitor meant; and the fact that the man had confidentially referred to Gallus in this way irritated her profoundly. She'd tell Gallus to leave. How dare he force his way into her house. She hastened to the triclinium and stood with her hand on the garlanded door-post, intending to have no nonsense. Gallus was seated on a couch, a papyrus sheet between his two hands, his face lighted joyously as his lips mutely framed the words. His head nodded slightly.

She knew that she couldn't tell him to go. Not all at once.

But she managed to say haughtily, "How is it that I find you here?"

He looked up, smiled, and frowned seriously. "I've written a poem for you." He rose, and held out the paper, wanting more than anything to ask where she had spent the night, but not feeling that he might presume so far. He merely said, "You were out early this morning."

"A friend of mine was in childbirth."

With child of a kiss, in the throes of deliciousness. Why had she lied? She didn't care what he thought; but she couldn't now take back what she'd said. She glanced at the poem. Another dull imitation of Philetas, she supposed. But before she had read the first line, she knew that it wasn't. There was something real in it; it was good. Her lips parted and she felt a bird of quick pleasure struggling behind her breasts.

Gallus watched her eyes moving over the paper. He could see that she was reading in a way different from that of the other day. He tried to peep and guess which verse she was reading, to hear the echo in her mind, to taste her response simultaneously.

She felt a trifle dazed, and couldn't read very clearly. There was a ringing in her ears. Some lines from the middle of the poem started out and demanded all her attention. They struck her like a blow, like the cry of a child, in-supportably, tenderly. She read them again and again.

while I live,
scarred by your absent kiss, I can't forget.
Forgive me that I loved, as I forgive
that you have failed to love. O love me yet.
Love is so easy a thing: a little sigh,
a body leaning closer in the dark,
an opening warmth where man and woman lie
touching like fluttering wings. . . .

She walked across to the couch and sat down. She wanted to think things out.

"Do you like it?" he asked, plaintively.

"Yes, I do," she answered, quickly. "Very much."

"Then you really might give a reading of my work?"

"Certainly I will."

He couldn't understand her constrained manner. He moved across the room and sat beside her, and she knew that she wanted nothing but him. The dilettante young noble of the night before with his pretty talk and his poses was no man. Gallus for all his weakness was real. She loved him.

He put his arm about her and kissed her on the throat, then drew back to look into her eyes. She turned to give him the reassuring smile for which she knew he craved; but she found him straining away wide-eyed. Speechless he pointed at her throat, and she put her hand up to it in alarm.

"What is it?" she asked, hoarsely.

"A lover's bite," he replied, in a thin voice of strangled passion. "On the very spot where I kissed you." He laughed jarringly. "Don't say I did it. It took more than a kiss like mine to leave that mark—to redden your beauty with the brand of the rose. You're his, branded. I suppose you prefer his kind of kisses. Mine wouldn't have stained you. You want some brute to maul you about, bruise you. And I believed you when you said you went to see a friend."

He burst into hysterical laughter. She sat motionless. It didn't matter. It had happened for the best. There could be no happiness between them. Better that their love should be crushed out before it crushed them both.

"He wasn't a brute." She leaned back against the cushioned end of the couch. "He was only a man—like all of you. He wanted no more and no less than you want. The kiss he gave me didn't hurt you any more than the one you gave me now has hurt him. Why don't you prove yourself the same as he is, and take what he took? I won't stop you. Why should I?"

Holding his temples between his palms, Gallus stumbled out of the room, leaving his poem still in her hands. She read it through again, dry-eyed. Yes, it was very good. He would certainly make a name for himself. His poem seemed to her the best since Catullus; she had good taste, and knew it. But what had his poetry to do with the situation? She had wanted him last time when she had seen only a mediocre piece. Anyway, thank the Chances, he was

settled now. She would be able to take up the thread of her existence again.

She wanted to rise and go about the house with care-free step; but the blood seemed to have drained out of her. She sat unmoving. He would return. Of course he would return when he recovered. Why didn't he return?

HE had already repented his haste. The gesture of renunciation was magnificent, but only as long as one actively renounced. It had been magnificent to walk out of the room in scorn of harlotry; but he wanted to keep on walking out, never reaching the door, never finding himself in the lonely crowded street. Fool that he was. She had been ready to give herself. What did anything else matter but that? What did it matter how many beds she had rolled across on the night before? At least he should have waited till after he'd taken her before he quarrelled. Fool.

But she had praised his poem. That was infinitely sweet. She had kept it in her hand. He was sure she was reading it now, sorry she had lost him.

Hurriedly he set out for his attic. She might send for him. It would never do to miss the messenger.

THE youth who restored young Clodia to her home was Quintus Cicero, the nephew of the orator. A high-flown lad, disturbed by the late divorce between his good-natured irascible father and energetic nagging mother, he was ready for any form of revolt; and when Antonius gripped his arm and thanked him, he decided to throw in his lot with the Cæsarians.

"Would you mind if I called here at times," he stammered. "I'm sick of that windbag of an uncle of mine—and my other uncle, Atticus, he's as bad, smiling mean-hearted hypocrite that he is. He wanted me to marry the daughter of a sickly old friend of his; and she'd been divorced too. Not for adultery or anything amusing like that, but she wet the bed or something at the wrong moments. With a pale face as shiny as a peeled onion. I ask you."

Fulvia had been demented with rage against Bhebeo, who was being stripped for a lashing when Clodia returned;

but in the flush of the reunion she clasped Clodia in motherly relief, and a tear trickled on to Clodia's ear. Clodia, who had longed for such a rush of affection, was so surprised that she failed to take advantage of it. She drew away and repeated:

"I won't go back to the country. I'll drown myself in the duck-pond if I'm sent there."

"You needn't go," said Fulvia, "if you'll promise to obey and keep with Bhebeo. And you mustn't visit your aunt again." The elder Clodia had been making herself a laughing-stock by running round with a young boy, driving out with him in a racing-gig, both of them dressed in the same short tunics.

"O I'll be ever so good," cried Clodia, earnestly. "I swear I will. I had a fearful time. I was almost eaten alive by rats."

She came nearer, wanting to make a return for the warm greeting; but Fulvia had moved away.

Antoni^{us} liked Quintus, and asked him to call again; and Quintus, peeping round the curtains in the hope of seeing Clodia once more, went out to drink and tell everyone how he had rescued the step-daughter of Antoni^{us} from a gang of ravishers. Antoni^{us} was the right sort of man, he thought; a man with a man's grip in his fingers and a good hearty laugh—different from the bleating crowd around his uncle Cicero.

Quintus pulsed with the wish for action, for something to destroy the world of talkers and compromisers.

A NEGRESS sat in an easy-chair, her milk-swollen breasts exposed with their slack tawny nipples. An embarrassed girl was milking her into the silver bowl held by an interested page-boy, keeping up the flow by sucking at the nipples and then dropping the milk from her mouth. A trail of escaped milk streaked the black creases of the belly of the negress. The negress grinned, pleased with herself. Cleopatra lay with her face on her wrists, watching. The milk was intended for a cosmetic, and she was having it produced under her supervision, so that no goat's milk should be substituted.

After the negress had gone, flashing the teeth of her smile and catching up her loose white cotton-dress, Cleopatra turned over and let the girls massage her face and breasts with the milk. It was an experiment she was trying out; she had noticed the negress yesterday and had the idea as she lay thinking before sleep.

The sensation was soothing, and she drowsed.

Images passed across her mind, quick as birds, merging like foam-crests. Her odious young brother whom she had married seven years ago; his intolerable efforts to show off, to be manly. He was only ten; and she had taken charge of things, successfully, till he felt himself fully grown-up, three years later. He'd tried to assert himself, and the final break had come. Miserable days. Court intrigues; plotting eunuchs, waddling slightly and always wanting to touch one as they talked; brawls in the streets of Alexandria; corpses washed up on the water-front of her garden with fishes nibbling at them; her flight from Egypt; the days when she was all alone gathering an army of Arabs to win back her throne; and then Cæsar. They had said little, and yet his embraces had brought her mind to maturity, as if his thoughts invaded her with his touch; and she had discovered her needs. She saw the whole world; with a unifying glance she saw its war-riven coasts, the huge tides of barbarian forces for ever surging in, for ever menacing the few centres of civilisation. She saw Cæsar as the binding-element, the new dispensation of power become law, widening the boundaries of empire, bringing in more and more barbarous tribes under the rule of order. Rome she respected; but she was Greek, and her world was the world created by Alexander, in which fear of the eastern races and their culture had been lost. East and West must mingle; she saw that; she felt that the rôle of her family, the Ptolemaioi, the sole remaining dynasty born from Alexander's conquests, was to complete what Alexander had spectacularly begun and what Cæsar had made constructively possible.

Then the plannings for power faded into the warmth of her body again, and she was content to be a woman rubbed with milk. Her skin would whiten; her strength would shine through it as sunlight shining through a lily-petal.

A golden haze enfolded her dream, and she saw the moon-woman. Isis seated on a throne, with the face of Cleopatra, her breasts streaming with milk of sustenance for the world, for the divine baby in her arms. Stella Maris, the Star of the Sea, the guardian light. And all this dream of universal empire must be held in the palm of her plump little hand, which one man's kiss could fill.

She moved restlessly on the cushions spread under her back and legs. Where was the man? No man had kissed her for months. Cæsar was the last. How could she wipe away his kiss with the kiss of a lesser man? Was she then to remain chaste all her years, sterilely cherishing that votive kiss?

She moved restlessly, as if her body was a dress of tight-fitting cloth out of which she sought to wriggle. No, that image was ingratitude, and she did not want to escape her body. She wanted to possess it; and how could one possess one's body except in the embrace of another—as one could only see one's face in a mirror?

Never had she been chaste for so many months before, except during the months when Cæsar was at his wars. For four years now she had been very chaste. The thought frightened her. She counted the months over and over.

A slave announced that Ammonios was at the door. Send him in. She lay restlessly stirring, counting over the months. Then she opened her eyes. Ammonios was regarding her gravely a few feet away. She waved her girls to stand back and lay panting slightly.

Ammonios spoke. "Money is impossible to get in Rome."

"Nothing is impossible."

"As your Majesty says, nothing is impossible. With the aid of the High Priest of Isis I financed a loan among the merchants of Puteoli and Neapolis, but things are growing worse at Rome. I fear for your Majesty's safety."

Cleopatra laughed. Pointing to the silver bowl, she bade one of the girls hand it to Ammonios. "Drink it," she said, "to sustain you after your efforts."

Ammonios stared at the white liquid with starting eyes. Was there a poison in it? Surely she would not dare to poison him here at Rome, especially at a moment when he was so useful. Curious her whims were. Perhaps it was a

joke. Hadn't she put some diarrhoetic mixture in the wine of a girl in her train whom Cæsar had once noticed admiringly, till the girl almost perished and was sold cheap in the slave-market? Gingerly Ammonios balanced the bowl on his finger-tips.

"Drink it," repeated Cleopatra, sternly.

Muttering an exorcism, he drank. The fluid tasted like milk, goat's milk with a touch of garlic. He stood waiting to feel the venom strike in his veins, his heart leaping, a sweat on his forehead. He wiped his lips feebly with his forefinger, puckering his brows.

"Don't be afraid. It was only the milk of a negress."

"Pah!" said Ammonios, and spat, remembering in time to catch the spittle on his robe. A filthy negress! He was a pure-blooded Greek, as he was ready to prove; there was no darker strain in his family; what insult had Cleopatra intended? Perhaps his great-grandmother—but no, that was too far away; he was ready to prove his blood was pure.

"What is the consul Antonius doing?" Cleopatra demanded, suddenly serious.

Ammonios bowed. "Nothing, your Majesty, except receive petitioners and deputations. The business of the State is falling into his hands, merely through the collapse of all the parties. The Cæsarians are no more dismembered and scared than their opponents. The heart has gone out of them all."

Cleopatra nodded. "Rightly so. Their world has been ended. They ended it by their own treachery. They have no faith now. Each man fears his brother. Rightly so. May they rot in hell."

She turned away, biting her lip, feeling the lazy length of her body to be irksome. She was a sealed vase. The kiss of Cæsar could not be removed. Almost she called to Ammonios, to the first available man-slave, to come and break that seal. But she couldn't. She was frightened. Her limbs felt heavy, useless; and there was no faith left in the world. Rightly so.

"I CAN'T look my father in the face," said Amos, lugubriously. He had decided that the safest person to use as confessor was Gallus; but Gallus, suffering for the lack of a girl whom he

had never possessed, could not grasp the qualm of Amos, which was based in too ardent and continuous possession. That was consoling, if also rather annoying. Amos felt himself to be burdened with sinfulness; and to be told that the burden was non-existent amounted to being told that he wasn't spiritually rent, and rent he was. He sighed and rolled his eyes.

"Why don't you go to the Baths?" suggested Gallus, trying to take an interest and to comprehend these eastern superstitions. Amos brightened. Although the suggestion didn't solve the spiritual pollution, it wasn't a bad idea. The cheapest baths wouldn't cost much, though the louts would jeer at his circumcision, and therefore Amos felt a religious objection to showing his nakedness. He didn't tell Gallus that Karni had lent him a few coins.

Gallus, rousing himself from the egoism of his own despair, was touched by the devotion of Amos, even if it included scruples of a shadowy nature. How could a man and woman in love do anything together that wasn't blessed from all stain by the guardian Venus? But he longed to help the loving pair, to enable them to live in each other's arms for ever. That would somehow shame Cytheris and himself, and at the same time perhaps charm his own love affair into a more halcyonic season.

"You couldn't get your father to buy and free her."

"O no, no," pleaded Amos, throwing up his hands. "I asked you not to say such things. He'd never forgive me. Karni couldn't even get the head of the washing-department to send us along some clothes. The head's a eunuch, and he hates her because she served out some stuffed sows-womb when he asked for apple-fritters. She's a wonderful girl, only too full of spirits. I'll have to lose her after all."

Gallus was saddened. No lovers had a chance. Either Love coupled those who couldn't find harmony together, or mated a suitable pair and then dragged them apart. It was so hard to forget Cytheris; but in his sympathy for Amos he found the smart least painful.

They began talking of the Messiah again.

"I'm not so sure now," admitted Amos. "The words of

the prophets are dark, and who has the lamp to read them?" He quoted glibly from Isaiah. "Thus says the holy man who was sawed in half by his enemies: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we thought him struck and afflicted by the Lord. But he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. He was despised and rejected of men. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoils with the strong, because he has poured out his soul unto death."

Gallus was deeply affected. "Stop," he said. "I remember something." What was it? Ah, a passage from Plato that he had heard used as a text by a declaiming Stoic; he had thought it mere rhetoric at the time, but now the words returned, indelibly real and ghastly. He quoted as closely as he could recall the sentence.

"The righteous man will be scourged and tortured on the rack, and bound; and he will have his eyes burned out, and then after much suffering he will be crucified."

Amos listened attentively. "So the Gentiles have their prophets." He didn't like to tell Gallus that those prophets were assuredly inspired by evil dæmons, by enemies of the great god Yahwe who would one day own the earth. Instead he told of Isaiah's vision of the day when the babe of peace would be born and the lion would lie down with the lamb.

But all the staved-off suffering of Gallus had swooped back upon him. He remembered the men and women wildly entranced in the Forum, and knew suddenly their hungry souls. Out of those souls a god would be created, a terrifying god, a god of humiliated and humiliating love, a god who was not satisfied with a fair exchange but would demand all, a god of intolerable love allowing no rival, leaving man no privacy, breaking down all the walls of reserve, the social quietudes, the compacts of family and friendship.

For a moment the jealous suffering soul of Gallus pierced the future.

Words from the *Attis* of Catullus rushed through his head

as they had rushed through Clodia's. He murmured the prayer to the Mother of All Living:

Far from my home keep this wild ecstasy.
Drive on the others, madden the others, not me.

"What is it?" asked Amos, fearful that some spell was being cast on him, and feeling under his shirt for the phylactery which was tied round his neck on a string.

AFTER Amos went, Gallus set to work again writing. He felt that he must express his bitterness or die. An idea came to him. He would write a devastatingly cruel satire and take it to Cytheris with a mock request that she would add it to the other for a public reading.

His stylus slid across the wax of the new tablet that Leonidas had bought. The abuse tumbled from him. Let it go down crudely; he could smooth it out later.

O twisted mouths can kiss her if they hold
a golden coin between the dirty teeth.
She longs for Midas parching life to gold;
a golden weapon in a scabrous sheath
is all her wish. It's stabbed her to the heart,
upwards, with gold. Her wounded body bleeds:
staunch her with gold; and should her sickness start,
clysters of gold will liquidate her needs.
And yet I die in beggary of a kiss.
Because she will not crook her little finger
with mine in love, I die. . . .

His hand trembled viciously. He was getting his own back.

VIII

AN ALTAR IS BUILT

IT was now nearing the end of the first week in April, and Antonius daily found himself more isolated. Whatever business of State was transacted went almost privately through his hands, not out of any intention on his part, but because no other magistracy was functioning. The Senate was moribund. The provincial governors had not even been notified of Cæsar's death. The upper-classes were only concerned with the tightness of money which made it difficult for them to pay the interest on their loans and to get out of Rome as quickly as they wished. Even Cicero, finding that all his friends had left Rome, decided to go south and see if he couldn't organise an opposition for the summer sessions. Atticus, his friend, wrote abusing Antonius and despairing over the fate of his lands at Buthrotum.

False reports, which could not be tested, arrived of alarming outbreaks. Gaul was on the verge of revolt; the Getæ were invading Macedonia; the Empire was falling.

The people were quiet. To the observer it seemed that they were apathetic; but that was far from the truth. The burning of Cæsar and the days of revelling riot had left them sated, not exhausted—cloyed with a heat of devotion that bade them rest and await the next message. For all their stillness they were tensely waiting. Then the rumour awoke that the prophet had been found. He was named Marius, a descendant of Marius the great hero and democrat, to whom Cæsar had been related by marriage. His eyes had flame in them; and he spoke of the day of vengeance and the earth consumed in fire and the mighty of the earth fallen into the trough of hell. He proclaimed Cæsar the God, and promised that under the reign of the Divine Cæsar all would be well. All wrongs would be righted. Men would live at

peace. The earth would bring forth plentifully, and there would be no more famine or disease or tears. Death would be conquered, for the dead would live.

Then one morning the prophet appeared with a rabble in the Forum; and they worked all day, and at evening they had raised a pillar of Numidian marble, twenty feet high, on the spot where Cæsar's body had last rested; and they inscribed it to the God Cæsar, to the Father of his People. They prayed to it, and poured wine and unguents about it, and kissed it. Men with life-long quarrels were reconciled before the Altar, and women embraced it and brought their children to touch it. Men came to take oaths and vows before it, swearing by the Genius of Cæsar, his vital force; for the Genius of a man was the power by which he procreated and, procreating, made contact with the life-stream of the race.

Antonius was outraged. "So that damned veterinary-surgeon has come back," he said. "The man that Cæsar banished as a noisy fraud. I'd like to screw his neck and knock down that pillar of his. What can Cæsar want with a pillar and an altar? It's madness."

All the true-blooded Romans felt likewise. They hated these deificatory rites, this eastern abandonment of the principle of will. Yet they couldn't clear themselves altogether of the emotion with its wish for an incarnated saviour. Even before Cæsar's death they had voted him honours approaching those of the gods, had put his statue in temples (where stood statues of other famous men), allowed his house to have a gable as temples had, and appointed Iulian priests to make a third guild of Lupercals. They had also permitted him to engrave his face on the coins—a divine prerogative. The eastern cities, indeed, had long past hailed him in terms of worship; four years ago Ephesus had described him as God Manifest and Common Saviour of Man. But now this attitude had come immeasurably closer; from a vague sentiment it had grown to a concrete obsession.

UNABLE to face Cytheris, Gallus sought to summon courage by trying out the poems on his grammarian friend Nicias. He changed the name Cytheris to Lycoris; for it was usual

in love-verses to have a pseudonym that scanned the same as the original name, and he didn't want Nicias to guess.

Nicias read the poems through, pausing to argue over certain scansion and word-usages; and then praised them in a non-committal way. Gallus saw that he couldn't place the work and therefore didn't like it; and he was pleased at this. But he also wanted to accuse Nicias of his hide-bound inappreciateness and force him to perceive what the poems meant. They were good; Gallus was sure of it.

To change the subject, Nicias went on, "What a long time since I saw you last. That night at Dolabella's."

Gallus frowned but Nicias wouldn't be stopped. "Didn't you think Dolabella'd collapse under the weight of Cytheris when he carried her off? I bet she weighs twice as much as he does. To my mind it was a worthier performance than the rape of Helena. A man could dare the Argive spears more easily than the jeers of his dinner-guests; and politeness wouldn't have stopped our mouths if his knees had given way."

He sniggered importantly. "Dolabella was concerned when she didn't call again at his invitation. He sent me to persuade her. She promised but didn't go. Don't tell anyone I told you."

Gallus was overjoyed. Surely her avoidance of Dolabella must have been on account of him, Gallus. But his joy was dashed by the next remark from Nicias. "Still, that hasn't stopped him talking about her everywhere. He says she has a mole on her left buttock and that the decoration ought to be made compulsory for all ladies of distinction. But that's enough scandal. Did you write to Pollio with the letter of introduction I gave you?"

GALLUS escaped as soon as he could, retired to the nearest tavern, and drank. After his sixth unmixed cup he looked up to see a shadow flitting across the table. Fabullus. The wretch seemed always hanging about somewhere nowadays.

"Give me a drink," said Fabullus in an aggrieved voice, finding himself observed. "Unless you've spent all your money with that Jew Ezra that cheated me, and his good-for-nothing son that's sponging on you."

"Go to hell," said Gallus, and then, feeling very lonely, added, "Sit down and help yourself."

Fabullus poured out an overbrimming cupful with shaky hand, his tongue passing thirstily over his lips. "You're a true friend. I'll never forget what you've done for me. Well, here's to Cæsar. If only he hadn't died, everything would have gone all right. He'd promised me to fix things up. I saw him only an hour before he died. Look here, Fabullus, he said, speaking man to man, this fullery is yours, he said, and yours shall it be."

"You're all wrong. Women are the curse. So nothing Cæsar could have done would have altered things."

"Been turned down, have you?" sneered Fabullus, taking more wine. "Serves you right for spending your money on Jews instead of giving her a present."

"She didn't turn me down," said Gallus, ferociously. He wasn't going to have the world thinking Dolabella had succeeded where he'd failed. After all, he could have had her if he hadn't bungled everything. "I turned her down. She's a fat trollop. I found her out. And how do you think I'd know her in a crowd. She's got a mole on her left buttock."

"Serves her right," said Fabullus, morosely, staring into his cup, and whirling the wine round. "Serves her right for touching a man like you. What's her name, if she remembers it herself?"

"Cytheris is her name," boasted Gallus. "Yes, the famous actress." He bellowed with laughter. "You didn't expect a fellow like me to have had a woman of her name and figure, did you? But I did, and I don't care who knows it. Cytheris. Can you spell it?"

He called for a piece of chalk and drew the back view of a woman on the wall, smearing a large star for the mole and writing underneath: "Cytheris the bandy actress as owned by Gallus the great poet."

"Don't you believe me now?" he asked, threateningly.

"I'd believe anything about women," replied Fabullus, "even that they'd cuddle a man like you. Jews are the only things worse than women, and there's not much difference. A woman sits on a pig where she can't look at it, and a Jew

can't look at it without spitting. I tell you what. I'll sell you my share in the fullery for ten thousand. You've been a good friend."

Gallus was feeling sick. "I'm going home."

Fabullus, with a great show of cleverness, stood up and leaned across the table to hide the half-full jar. "Go and pay your bill first," he cautioned. "I wouldn't like them to go chasing you." Gallus staggered off, and Fabullus quickly placed the jar under the table. It was his, paid for by the money that was rightfully his since otherwise Gallus would have used it to pay the fullery-account, out of which Ezra would cheat Fabullus.

When Gallus had gone, Fabullus sat at the table, slowly finishing the jar, which he hugged between his knees when not filling his cup. "I'll tread on that Gallus some day," he numbled to himself. "He's come between me and a fortune. He's done me a wrong." He searched his drunken mind to locate the wrong, but failed. It didn't matter, however. Since he had long ago lost all sense of time, he saw all wrongs done to him as the primal wrong, and the primal wrong he interpreted as the loss of his fullery. Gallus had somehow put the Jew up to his tricks. Fabullus sat drinking and staring at the inscription on the wall.

THE cat miaowed and stretched out its paws, then sank back into the bed of rags. The tall, gaunt man who was seated on a stool beside the brazier turned and looked at the cat for a while, and curled up again on his stool, biting his thumb-nails. Then he looked again at the cat with bright, cunning eyes. His lips framed soundless words. He reached over, fondled the cat, feeling with active finger-tips on its throat and belly. At last, with a quick nip, he caught a flea, and, raising his hand over the brazier, dropped it upon the flames.

A young girl entered, dressed in a dark blue shift of coarse stuff, above which her face showed palely, with thin regular features; her long hair hung down her back, unbound; her voice was timid.

"There's someone to see you."

"Have I not told you that I see no one till Jiar has fed," he answered, in a low, rasping voice.

"It's a message from the Queen," she persisted, weakly.

The man regarded the cat for a while. The cat again shot out its forelegs with claws opening, dug the claws into the cloth, carefully unhooked them, and returned to its sleep.

"Send the messenger in."

The girl came slowly forwards. "You're not angry with me . . ."

He hit out at her, striking against her hip. "Go away and do as I tell you."

Meekly the girl left the room. The man did not stir again till he heard the door open and someone enter. When the newcomer was close, he looked up abruptly, laid his finger on his lips, and pointed to the cat.

Sara grinned, bowed to the cat, and then turned to the man on the stool.

"I come from my royal and divine mistress Cleopatra to speak to one that calls himself Marius——"

The man interrupted him with a wild gesture and started up, knocking over the stool. "I tell you that my name's Marius," he shouted. "I come of the stock of the conqueror, and I claim his property at Arpinum. One day I'll make the council there kiss my thumbnail while I spit in their faces. I have written to Cicero. He's a relation of mine. His grandmother Gratidia adopted a Marian child. Unless he gives me his support, I will wipe him out. I will have no mercy." His voice lowered. "I must obey the voice."

He bent down to fix the stool, but straightened up without warning and grasped Sara's arm.

"What did Jiar say?" He whispered, pointing to the cat. "Did you hear?"

The cat was lazily turning over, and Marius sank down on his stool. "There is no need to be afraid," he went on, reassuringly. "There is no danger now. I am glad for your sake. Me nothing can hurt."

Sara watched him closely, unable to decide if he was crazed or acting. "I come from the Queen," he repeated, feeling that it would never do to compromise his mistress with this man.

"Ah yes," said Marius, turning to him, and his eyes were clear and intelligently keen. "What has the Queen to say to her humble servant?"

"She sends you her congratulations for your defence of our dead Lord Cæsar, and wishes to aid you in the good work."

"She is welcome," said Marius, solemnly. "All are welcome. I reject none, though I have been rejected. I scorn none, though I have been scorned. I slay none——" He broke off and looked cunningly at the cat, as if he had almost been tripped into revealing a secret. Then his eyes cleared again, and he spoke in his tones of shrewd comprehension.

"I am at the Queen's service."

"Cæsar left a son," said Sara, meaningly. "There is a child named Cæsarion."

Marius considered the statement. "It is just that the son should succeed to the patrimony. I shall make Cæsarion the king of the earth. You can tell your mistress that I shall do her will, because it is not her will alone."

"She would like to hear further what plans you have."

"I have no plans," said Marius, eagerly. "I act as the voice bids me. I have built an altar to the manifest God. I have summoned the people to destroy their oppressors, the murderers of God. I shall come and go with armies across the world, and the son of Cæsar I shall crown King in the Capitol. More I cannot say. Beyond that the veil is drawn."

Sara watched him intently. The man was mad, but he could rouse the mob. In him spoke the voice of the eastern provinces, tortured into action.

"For myself," resumed Marius, sharply, as if he were now expounding the only difficult part of his programme, "I demand only one thing, but nothing less will satisfy me. I demand the Arpinate villa of my ancestors. No one shall thwart me."

"And you will tell the people about the son of Cæsar?"

Marius bowed his head. "So it is written in the leaves of the Sibyl and the book of the Stars. It is weary work, but I must not falter. Righteousness must be fulfilled."

Sara slipped a heavy purse into his hand. "To help on the good work. From the son of Cæsar."

Marius threw the chinkling wallet on to the table. "It will serve its purpose. Tell your mistress to have no fears."

Sara backed out of the room, somehow afraid to turn from Marius.

Marius sat looking into the brazier flames, his eyes glittering. After a while the girl re-entered, "Isn't it time yet to feed Jiar?"

"Yes, yes," cried Marius, springing up, his face distorted with glee. He seized the cat by the slack of its neck, and, lifting open the girl's upper-dress, thrust the cat down into her bosom, holding the folds tight up against her throat so that the cat couldn't exit that way. The girl screamed as the frantic cat tore at her skin and dress, fighting to escape. She leaped and twisted, held by the hand of Marius grasping her dress, until at last the cat slid its way out and dropped at her feet.

"Bring Jiar some milk now," commanded Marius, and let the girl go. "And take that trash there." He indicated the purse of gold on the table. "Distribute it among the poor."

"I'm bleeding," sobbed the girl. "I'm torn and scratched all over."

Marius took no notice, and, picking up the purse, she crept out of the room. The cat, who had been standing with fur and tail erect and with teeth bared, sat down and began licking its back paws. Marius stared into the flames.

NEXT day Gallus awoke feeling very sick; but Leonidas dosed him with cabbage-water mixed with ingredients that he refused to divulge, having been sworn to secrecy by the witch from whom he had bought the recipe. After that Gallus retched, ate some meal-porridge, and felt better. He must face Cytheris, or he would be driven to drink again. Without allowing himself to think any more about the interview, he caught up the papyri on which the envenomed elegies were transcribed, and set out.

Cytheris was in. Indeed she was still lying in bed, and permitted Gallus to be admitted to her bedroom. Her hair was down over her shoulders, untidily rich with gold of the early sun. Without looking at him she played with the hanging at her side, and said, "Why did you come?"

"To show you what I've written, Something more for you to recite."

He swayed on his feet, his mind blank except for the re-

heard gesture of contempt. He thrust the papers into her hand. She held them away for a moment, and then began reading. As she read, he looked at her face, and realised what he had forgotten. He loved her and didn't care what she had done or would do, as long as she loved him in return. He snatched the papers away.

"It isn't true," he said, thickly. "It's only suffering. I love you. I love you. I love you."

He threw himself over her feet and covered his face with his hands. There was a bliss in feeling her feet against his ribs, though tunic and sheets lay between; her toes, her ankles, her shin-bones, her knee-cap, he loved them all; he loved every minute hair on her body. How unfair life was.

She gazed down at him. It would always be thus. He was a weakling. But she didn't care. She loved him too—for the moment anyway. Doubtless it wouldn't last. But neither did life. One took what one could, while one could. She reached down and stroked his head.

He looked up incredulously and saw her faint smile. In another pulse their mouths had met.

It all happened so easily, when it happened, so simply. It was his poem come true. It was life suddenly perfected, life become expression balanced and rhythmic. Only thus, writing and loving, was the wound of loss staunched and the maimed body given freedom. He had lived for this meeting moment. Down so many streets of time, through so many winding adventures and mishaps, through so many fragments of misery and joy, they had both been treading life for this moment which gave significance at last to all that went before and all that came after. It was strange.

They both felt they had known each other like this infinities ago. In the first throb of male and female seeds mating in the timeless womb.

Love is so easy a thing: a little sigh,
a body leaning closer in the dark,
the opening warmth where man and woman lie
touching like fluttering wings

WHEN Sara came with a message from Cleopatra, Antonius discovered how restive he had grown. "Are you afraid?"

she asked through Sara's mouth. "Leave a sealed message with someone you trust, to be opened in case you don't return by morning. But I don't think you're so very much afraid of me."

Antoni^{us} looked at Sara, and his lips felt dry and he longed for the touch of Cleopatra. Faithful two whole years, and he had to fight his wife before he got a kiss out of her. He hadn't even tried a house-slave, and no one thought anything of a man taking his own house-slaves.

"What does she want to discuss?"

Sara humped his back helplessly. "How should I know, save that she told me it involved the future of Rome?"

Antoni^{us} had a fair idea what her theme would be, but he wanted to excuse himself by pretending that he was acting for state reasons. The invitation was irresistible; he saw himself again catching her hands, and the pænula lifted and falling open, her surrendering looseness before she had called on Sara to produce his dagger. He would promise anything; promises were only breath. Still, she might have something to divulge after all. She, if anyone, had been Cæsar's confidante.

He licked his lips. "I'll come," he said, and glanced round furtively. Looking up he saw that Sara had observed him. That was the final touch; this menial would laugh behind his back. It was absurd that he should be so tethered; he must make a move of independence; nothing short of a visit to Cleopatra would vindicate his manhood.

"I'll come," he repeated, loudly, to show that he wasn't afraid; but without stirring he listened to the echoes. How far would the sound carry—surely not to Fulvia's ears. But nothing would stop him. He would go. He wouldn't be unfaithful; he would go merely to prove himself not enslaved by Fulvia. He would go as a spy on Cleopatra. She was a dangerous woman; it would be advisable to hear what she was scheming.

WHEN it was nearing dusk, Cytheris sent Gallus home, saying that she had an appointment to recite, which she couldn't afford to let pass. Gallus questioned her with his eyes, unable to express his fears more definitely; and she kissed

his eyes and told him not to be foolish. She was his now, and she would be no one else's. Tomorrow morning he could come to see her again. It was true that she had the appointment; but as soon as Gallus had gone with scores of farewell kisses and returning protestations, she knew that she had no intention of going out. She wanted to think, to be alone.

Was it the harlot's wisdom, that men tired and must be kept at arm's length? No, she answered her heart. It was fear that she would betray herself, that she would give herself irrevocably. Even with Antonius she had felt free, mistress of herself; and she couldn't bear to feel that reserve breaking down. She had always stood aside and calmly criticised her actions, however much she might have seemed carried away and corybantic. It was that which had preserved, led her through to her present affluence and liberty. It was by dint of astute calculation that she had brought herself to the notice of her owner Volumnius and become his mistress while still a child. She had amused him with her powers of mimicry and wheedled him into affording her proper training; she had worked hard till she was at the head of her profession; she had set out to capture Antonius and had done so. For years she had been his acknowledged mistress; he had introduced her as Volumnia his wife while on official tours in the municipalities, and made his dear, feckless old mother accept her as a daughter-in-law.

She looked back coldly over her life. She hadn't given herself always out of mere calculation; there had been many men whose kisses she had allowed because she liked them, and they seemed to want her dreadfully in a way she had never wanted a man; but she had given no more than that idling pity, and next moment she had forgotten the men. Was Gallus to destroy the whole plan of her life—and give what in return?

Yet how was she to withdraw now? She should never have permitted him to call after he had first left. And yet she wasn't sorry. She took her left breast in her palm and pressed it up till she could just manage to touch it with her lips. Somehow she loved her body in a new way, not merely as an instrument, but as an entirely intimate possession—a sense that she had only known before in vagueness of toilet dreams.

WOULD he come? Would he stay away? Cleopatra shredded the petals of a rose and threw the scattering petals at one of her girls, Thatris. She had been sponged all over with olive-oil scented with balsam, and then bathed in warm rose-water; and she felt increasingly restless. If he didn't come, she didn't know what she'd do with herself. Already she had signs of a headache, but that had passed when she was bathed. Yet if he did not come . . .

"Is there any of the slaves you like more than another?" she asked Thatris.

"No," said the girl, warily, a frail girl, olivine with heavy eyelashes.

"Call in the first male-slave that passes," commanded Cleopatra, yawning.

The girl went to the door and beckoned. A sinewy Greek entered. Cleopatra gesticulated and said a few words.

"No, no," cried Thatris, reddening. She drew closer to Cleopatra. "Not him, anyway." She faltered. "I like Hilarion better."

"Call Hilarion then."

Thatris pushed the sinewy and disappointed Greek out of the room with her hands on his shoulder-blades, whispering to him. Then she leaned against the doorpost, as if her strength had gone. In a few moments Hilarion entered, a gold-haired lad dressed in page's uniform.

"Tell him what he has to do," said Cleopatra. "Come on now, don't be bashful."

Thatris whispered again. The lad started, laid his hand on the small dagger at his side, and then bowed. He unbuckled his belt.

"Come on now." Cleopatra repeated her orders. "I've waited long enough." She yawned.

With expressionless face she watched. So had that friend of her brother's watched on a night four years ago, but he had had an ugly grin on his face. Well, he was dead now. Dead; and yet the dance of life still went on. Lovers clasped in fear of the dark, scraping a little warmth from the platters to hearten their starved bellies. Would she look as ungraceful and lumpish as Thatris—in an hour's time when Antonius arrived, if he ever arrived? Would she gasp as stupidly,

closing her eyes to bring nearer the darkness that was fear, the darkness that no lamp could burn clear of ghosts and rat-presences? Only the lamps of warm blood kept the darkness at bay; but they had little power. They guttered and faded as soon as the ardours of touch slackened. Thus was the ancient flame lighted, by two sticks rubbed together; patiently rubbed until the glow of gold, a new life, smouldered and burst redly out, dying away as soon as the friction ceased.

"You can go now," she said to Hilarion. Then, yawning again without any effort to hide her teeth, she called to Thatris. "Come and dab some scent behind my ears. Press gently into the roots of the hair. Gently."

The girl's hands were trembling.

ANTONIUS was met at the gate by Sara, who had been waiting behind a rhodendron-bush. He was attended by a single slave and muffled up in a thick military abolla. Sara led him to a side-door; and once inside the house Antonius threw off the abolla and revealed himself in a light Greek shift. "I have left a note with my brother to be opened at midnight if I haven't returned," he said warningly to Sara; and Sara nodded and led him down a corridor, halting before some lofty curtains. As he parted them, the sound of music and a woman's voice was heard; and Antonius, placing a hand on his shoulder, bade him wait.

It was Cleopatra's voice, and she was singing to the lyre. The voice was not powerful, neither was it particularly sweet or melodious; but it was clear, rather deep-toned, and disturbingly vibrant. She sang an Alexandrian song.

The waters follow the moon
but the fishes do not always go with the tide.
I am wholly Clearista's
but there are thoughts swimming in my blood
that turn to other girls.
Nevertheless I am wholly Clearista's.
Come and sit on my lap without a chemise.

Antonius smiled. It was the kind of song he liked. Swinging Sara aside, he opened the curtains and entered.

Cleopatra was sitting on a backless chair, half-turned away, the lyre resting in her lap. She did not look to see who was entering.

"You are welcome, consul Marcus Antonius," she said, and dropped the lyre on a cushion. Her voice was surprisingly soft after the deeper tones of the song. Antonius stood facing her. She was dressed in a single-piece robe of Coan stuff dyed pale gold and trimmed with purple bands. He felt that she was the most desirable woman he had ever seen, and yet he did not want to want her. Always it was his fate nowadays to be entangled with women who wanted to use him for their own ulterior purposes. But it was women like Cytheris he really desired, women who wished to make no claim upon him, giving and taking, and accepting the moment as paid for by the moment's experience. Then he forgot Cytheris and forgot Fulvia, and forgot everything except that he was looking into Cleopatra's eyes.

She rose and moved towards the couch, sat down and made room for him at her side.

"What is it you want this time?" he heard himself asking, bluntly.

"Perhaps it is justice again," she replied, in a tender voice, half-jestingly. "What do we all ask but justice—and perhaps our complaints show that it is what we get. Maybe the gods deliberately misunderstand, and when we pray for justice against our transgressors, they pretend we are asking to have our own transgressions judged." She paused, and added even more lightly, "Perhaps I want nothing except to have a visitor. No one calls on me nowadays."

He felt drugged, heavy. He could not speak. He clasped and unclasped his hands over his knees, leaning back.

She went on. "Perhaps I want to offer something this time instead of asking. But first you must have some wine to drink. Some wine from Egypt." She clapped her hands and Thatris entered with a cedar-tray ranged with jugs and glasses.

"Alexandrian work," said Cleopatra, picking up a jug of intricate and delicately blown glass, green and white. Frail crystalline birds clustered around it, their eyes set with emeralds. "What have you to say of a town that produces such craftwork? But you have seen Alexandria. Have you seen our Museum and our Library? Have you talked with the professors in the Medical School? Have you called at the

government-offices and seen how industry is ordered in Egypt—how we have escaped the problems of your Roman world; how we, the government, own monopolies of all the main industries and sources of production; how all our industries and trades are subdivided and standardised? The Nile abets us, and we control agriculture as you folk that pray to a wilful Sky-god cannot guess. Did you see all this at Alexandria besides the lean hairless legs of the girls in the Rhacotis?"

She spoke mockingly, and Antonius could not follow her meaning. He answered dully. "I was there only a few days, and tired after riding through the desert."

She watched him out of the corner of her eyes. What should she do with this man who had failed to rescue or avenge Cæsar? She was inclined to insult him and turn him out. She had a seal on her body, the seal of Cæsar; and she would never be able to break it, for Cæsar had no equal. She dropped back into the cushions, her hands falling nervelessly into her lap. Her body shook faintly from head to foot.

Antonius, who had gulped a large cupful of potently spiced Mareotic wine, saw that flutter of her body, and took it for an invitation. Forgetting everything save that she was so close, so fragrantly desirable, he shivered in turn, involuntarily snapping between thumb and forefinger the thin handle of the cup he held. Dropping the cup on to the floor, he turned to her, eager to escape from the oppressions of the world and from the mockery of words he couldn't understand; and as she was lifting with a vaguely disquieted surprise, he clasped her in his arms.

Cleopatra heard a voice whispering in her blood: The seal is broken, not worthily, for who could be worthy after Cæsar? but it is broken, and it is pleasantly broken. A wave of stormy sweetness mounted up within her, shaking her violently; and she felt like the scattering petals of the rose that she had thrown at Thatris.

AN hour later she clapped her hands and bade Thatris fetch more wine. Antonius lay with his head on her breasts, and, looking down, she could see only the short, curly hairs with here and there a thread of grey. She held him tight and

would not let him move as the girl returned with the tray. Then she poured out a cupful of wine silently on to the floor, an oblation to the dead Cæsar in whose house she lay.

Antoni^{us} drank, and felt his mood of golden warmth fading. He knew that she was about to ask something of him; and he would agree, although it would be something he detested.

"I said that this time I meant to make a gift to the consul Antoni^{us}," she said. "Very well. I offer him his consulship."

"I haven't lost it yet," said Antoni^{us}, mystified.

"Within a week you will lose it, unless you do as I say." She patted him as he started, unable altogether to smother his anger. "Don't think I threaten you. It is not my actions of which I speak. Are you so badly informed of what goes on at Rome that you don't know what I mean? Within a week the populace will have risen and taken control of the city. They will slay all Cæsar's murderers that they can catch—and——"

"Yes?"

"Naturally they will call for the son of Cæsar as Cæsar's successor. Don't jump like that. It's not my own plans I mention, but those that live in the full hearts of the people."

He considered her statement. There was a scheme of hers somewhere behind what she said. The people had never thought of Cæsarion.

"How do you know this?"

"There is a man whose work can rouse the people. He calls himself Marius."

"A charlatan. A madman."

"Still, he can rouse the people, and I hear that he is calling for Cæsarion."

Antoni^{us} saw her plan. She had bribed this loon of a prophet. But there was danger and an insane power in the man if he was given a free hand; the people were so ready for any call of turbulence. Antoni^{us} hated the scheme; a typical piece of eastern chicanery, un-Roman, purely destructive, doomed to a futile exhaustion. Hercules, he'd crush it.

She felt the tautening of his muscles. "But as you are thinking, there's no coherence in a mob. It is nothing but a lot of drops of water, without consistency. Yet water,

when it moves in mass, has its hammering power. A wave can smash a boat in two if it drops sheer. After the mob has passed, there will be a new Rome—or none at all. I admire Rome. I would not like it to be smashed. That is why I speak to the only man who can bring the new Rome to birth.”

Was it true? Had he the virtue in him? And if he had, was Cleopatra’s the right way?

She went on, “On what side will you stand?”

He answered hoarsely, “No harm shall come to you. That I swear. But I can’t see my way yet . . . Perhaps you’re right.”

He saw the mob surging out, breaking down all the old walls, and himself carried on the crest. Why not? He drank again. “Perhaps you’re right. But where do I come in if Cæsarion is to be proclaimed?”

“You will be his regent—and I will be your wife.”

She spoke in a low voice that sank into his vitals with a knife-thrust of warmth. But he wasn’t more astonished than she herself. She thought quickly. It was the only way. Her brother would have to be assassinated, and Fulvia could be divorced. Not until now had she faced the fact that she would have to marry Antonius if she was to succeed. It was what she had wanted with Cæsar, but she had never dared to state it openly. Something in Cæsar, while stirring her to strange depths, had always daunted her.

The idea was marvellously attractive to Antonius, and the nearness of her body made it seem feasible. It was an idea so entirely impractical that perhaps it was the very one suitable for a world gone mad. Objections rushed into his mind, but he brushed them aside. They were all based in the old state of things; if he and Cleopatra began a new world, where would the old rules apply? But it was all too risky, grounded on the noise of a mob.

She knew why he was hesitant. “It isn’t only Rome. Egypt will be ours. The rest of the East is ripe for the change. Gaul and Spain know only that they must bow to new masters; it’s all one to them who the masters are. But Cæsar’s name they reverence. All the veterans will be on our side.”

She hurried on, speaking vehemently. Antonius saw the force of all her arguments; there was something inescapably right about them; yet he couldn’t quite make the first

step, the utter repudiation of the Roman constitution and the fiction that all Romans were free. Even Cæsar had never dreamed of such a step; however much he used the mob, he worked within the law, straining it perhaps, yet searching for a principle of continuity in change. Would not these uncompromising measures snap the life out of the world? Yet Cæsar had perished. Perhaps amid violence only Cleopatra's way would succeed. But what courage was needed; there was a magnificence about her plan.

"Don't you see that the world's disorder can no longer be tolerated? Henceforth the State must accept responsibility for its citizens, for the landless and out-of-work and ill? That is the meaning behind all this tumult. It is the people demanding that their rulers be responsible, and it clouds itself in the dream of a god. You and I are the gods of the earth . . ."

He reached for more wine; but he knew that no amount of wine, not even of this rich Mareotic vintage, could intoxicate him as her words were intoxicating him—the greatness of her vision and the nearness of her rose-scented body.

"WHERE has Marcus gone this afternoon?"

Fulvia looked narrowly at Lucius, who raised his brows and shook his head. Then he spoke:

"Something to do with the veterans, I suppose."

She looked at him suspiciously again and turned away. Lucius put his hand into the bosom of his tunic and felt the stiff edge of the paper that Antonius had handed him. He had been hurt at not being told its contents; and seeing that the seal was carelessly done and no knot tied in the string, he had opened it. It read: "If I'm not back by midnight, bring a couple of hundred soldiers and interview Cleopatra. She will know all about it." Lucius wanted to follow Fulvia and give her the note. Antonius deserved it for not having trusted his brother; but Lucius had another motive in wanting Fulvia to see that writing, a motive that made him writhe with black discontent. For it was not part of his code to woo a brother's wife; and he had no abstract code of fidelity to a wife. He was shocked at his brother's behaviour, shocked as he would have been to see a man throw a jewel

down a sewer—or since he did not care for jewels, a beautifully figured and tempered sword. For swords he loved; swords and Fulvia.

THERE was a scratching noise outside the door of the house of Cytheris, and the janitor at length opened and looked out wondering if a dog was trying to gnaw the door down; there were some very hungry dogs in Rome, and nowadays anything might happen—hadn't news come that a bull had spoken in the Sabine uplands? He saw a cloaked, disreputable figure and suspected the worst.

"What are you doing to our door?" he asked, indignantly. "This isn't a privy, let me remind you."

"I must see your mistress," said Fabullus. "I have a message—from Gallus."

The janitor let him in, sniffing, for he objected on principle to Gallus, having sensed that he was an impecunious young rip who boded no good to the properly conducted house of an unattached libertina. Fabullus was exactly the kind of messenger such an interloper would send.

Cytheris was surprised, but not displeased, awakening from her reverie. Gallus must have written another poem and been unable to wait; she forgot that she was supposed to be out. Then she remembered, and was angry. Gallus was trying to catch her in a lie.

Fabullus shambled in, and at once she knew that something was wrong—something far worse than a simple trap to find whether she was at home. There was an evil look in the man's face. It recalled many things; faces dimly lighted-up in the slaves' quarters of her childhood, a negro half-blind and slaving, men trying to be reassuring, beastly faces.

"What is it?" she asked, in alarm. "Is he hurt?"

"I'm a proprietor," said Fabullus, making an attempt to stand upright. "I own a fullery, though I'm at law about it. The state of the law dealing with partnerships is disgraceful. Several eminent counsel agreed with me. Give us time, they said. But judgment in my favour will be pronounced any day now. Any day."

"What do you want with me?" She was paralysed by her sense of evil, by the dark memories aroused.

"It's all only for your own good." He shook his finger at her. "Do you know a fellow called Gallus?"

"What about him?"

"Ah, I thought you knew him. For he knows you. Inside-out one might say. He says you've got a mole on your left what-do-you-call-it."

She paled and quivered. His words lashed her; he was a spectre combining all the evil she had ever known; if he had raised his hand to kill her, she couldn't have moved. She looked up, wide-eyed, imploring. "Go on."

"He was bragging about you to a whole tavern-full, scribbling up jokes on the wall to prove it all. The great poet, he says, has made a capture, a woman that calls herself a bad actress by trade, but her name in the dark is Cytheris, and she has a mole, guess where. So he drew a picture of her, mole and all, and wrote her name. And I thought I'd tell you about it. I don't expect to be believed in a world of liars, so you'll find the drawing on the wall of the Crab Tavern. But he drew you fatter than you are."

He squinted at her and tried to look gallant, laying his head on one side and closing an eye.

Cytheris didn't want to hear any more. She knew it was true; it was what she'd expected. Gallus was nothing but a baby of vanity, a cruel idiotic baby; and she had given him her heart. Well, she'd take it back, though she died. She would regain her old balance. It had been more decent to be mercenary, ready-limbed, laughing; what had happened to make her dream of other things?

"What do you want?" she asked. "Money, I suppose. Everyone wants money."

"I wouldn't say no," replied Fabullus, proudly realising that he'd come out of pure malice, without a single thought of reward. "But I came in th' interests—of public morality." He achieved the phrase with an effort and swung to save himself from falling. "What about calling for a cask of wine, and you and me having a night out? He didn't draw you half as nice as you are."

Cytheris found her purse, threw it at him, and said coldly, though she could not see him through the starting tears. "Take that and get out before you're thrown out."

She succeeded in holding back her tears till Fabullus had reclaimed the purse from the floor and left the room.

DUSK had settled down when Antonius crossed the Bridge, muffled in his abolla. He still felt elevated to the height of Cleopatra's conceptions and sure that he wouldn't fail them. What had been tormenting him all these weeks but the feeling that he couldn't step into Cæsar's place because he had nothing to give on Cæsar's level? Alone, he was still a pretender; but with Cleopatra to hearten him he could become Cæsar's equal. Her schemes seemed madly impossible at first glance, and yet the more one thought about them the more they seemed the only ones adequate to the needs of the world.

But he felt the lack of a lieutenant. Much would have to be done before he could divorce Fulvia. That would be the hardest moment of all; but he could do it by a note; he needn't face her. But who could he use as his lieutenant? His brothers would be of use later, but he shrank from speaking to them yet. Gaius wouldn't take the matter with the right seriousness; and Lucius, Antonius obscurely felt, would somehow object, would fight against the divorcing of Fulvia. Then Antonius had an idea that made him stride on faster with hurdling pulse. Dolabella was the man. He had been hiding ever since the indiscretions of the days following the murder; he would be only too pleased at any chance of a new start; he was the other consul, and young, reckless, inflammable, the very kind of fellow to see the full sweep of Cleopatra's plans and ardently embrace them.

But how to get in touch with him? Of course Antonius could send a messenger, but preferred some more personal approach if possible; a message could be so easily misunderstood. Then he had it. Cytheris had been seeing Dolabella, for Fulvia had mentioned it, to see if she could catch Antonius out in a jealous response. She was the very person; dear, light-hearted Cytheris. Antonius warmed with affection for her, and had a strong desire to see her, to tell her all about Cleopatra. That last part mightn't be advisable, but he still wanted to see her. He had broken clear away from Fulvia, and felt the impulse to rebel even further strengthening

in him. He wanted to see Cytheris if only because he'd sworn to Fulvia never to see her again.

Cytheris had told the janitor not to admit anyone else, but Antonius didn't wait to be refused. He pushed past, leaving the janitor silenced by his broad-shouldered presence of authority; and before any objections could be made, he had passed the hall and entered the bedroom.

She was seated on the bed, trying to find the energy to summon her maids and retire; and she looked up terrified at the footsteps, the figures of Fabullus and Gallus merging in her mind to produce something indescribably abhorrent. But she saw the familiar and unexpected face of Antonius, and her heart came back to her. She jumped up, crossed the room, and caught him in her arms.

"You dear old thing," she said. "O what a beating you'll get at home for this."

He was surprised at the heat of her welcome, and wondered for the first time if it had really been wise to come. The past should be left in the past. But her pleasure was so sincere; he couldn't but be pleased in turn.

She beat on his chest with her small fists. "What a big strong man. I'd forgotten there was any such men left except in a virgin's dream. And yet he's got a heart thumping inside as loudly as in any pretty young poet." She laid her head on his breast.

Roaring with laughter, he gave her a hug and let her go. Then he quietened. "But I've come on business, young woman."

"I love business," she said, smoothing the bed-coverlet. "I know twenty-three new indecent songs. But come and tell me how grandma Fulvia punished you for stealing the honeypot."

He sat down. "You're the sweetest girl that ever prospered for being naughty, and you make me home-sick for a romp. But you don't realise what a world it's suddenly become. I can't think of anything but politics. Young woman, the fate of the world rests on these shoulders of mine."

"They're broad enough. One of them can carry me, so I suppose the two of them won't have any trouble with the world."

"You must listen." He caught her hands, and then recalled how he had caught Cleopatra's hands once. He let the hands of Cytheris fall into her lap, and spoke with wrinkled brow. "I want your help. I want you to take a message to Dolabella for me."

She shrank back. "Dolabella!"

Too late he realised what a fool he had made of himself coming to ask a late mistress to convey a message to his fortunate successor. No woman could bear such a rank lack of jealousy. He tried to cover himself.

"Of course it pangs me to the heart to ask you, darling, but I heard how friendly with him you were; and I said to myself, Away with jealous thoughts, Cytheris is the one to help."

She saw how he was trying to make up for the way he had wounded her; he was a dear, a brutally clumsy dear. She liked him still, very much liked him, even if he had been so crude in telling her that he no longer cared whose she was . . . Dolabella, the man whom everyone knew to be his enemy, the seducer of his late wife Antonia . . .

"I'll take the message," she said, blithely. After Gallus why should she expect anything of men? She must be hard. She had lost her old tender-hearted aloofness; nothing remained now but deliberate hardness to save her.

GALLUS was lying in bed in his attic with his hands under his head, still wrapt in the remembered touch of Cytheris. Images of her lithe limbs floated across the darkness, mingling with images of himself as an acclaimed poet and statesman, turning to Cytheris always.

Leonidas lay on his pallet in a corner and watched through the window a star that hung against the eaves like a welling drop of silver water. He knew that the stars were dæmons with power over his life, but he wasn't very afraid, because he had bought a powerful charm consisting of a paper-slip inscribed with words in a strange language and a strong smell of fish. The smell was the smell of Venus, the sea-goddess, who often rode a porpoise, though Leonidas didn't believe the sailor who swore he'd seen a sea-nymph with breasts on her buttocks. He sighed. He'd certainly burn the house down if he tried to boil a sheep's head in the cauldron he'd

bought a week ago out of his savings; he'd have to keep it till Gallus had a country-house; years and years perhaps.

Gallus saw the star and felt that it was the eye of Venus, a guardian light exhaled from the essence of Cytheris.

OUTSIDE the house of Cytheris a man was pacing up and down, muttering to himself. Fabullus had been standing on the opposite pavement, unable to leave the vicinity, sure that there was more to find out; and in proof of his certainty there had come along a cloaked stranger, a man far too big to be Gallus. Who was it?

Fabullus crossed the road and stood at the side of the outer door. There was a small pillar on either side, and he crouched hidden, able to see through the slit between pillar and wall. A cold wind had blown up, but his curiosity was far greater than his discomfort. He did not notice the passage of time as his ears strained for the sound of footsteps. He would have stood there all night if need be; but it was not long before the sound came. Pressing his forehead against the cold stone, he stared towards the door that would soon open.

It opened, and a man stood on the threshold, adjusting his abolla. Fabullus saw the face clearly in the lamplight. Then the door shut, and the man went off, his slave-attendant trotting at his side.

"They're all in it," groaned Fabullus, and still waited, retreating across the road to study the upper windows.

His tactics were well considered; for a slave ran out, and shortly afterwards a litter appeared before the door. Two torchbearers struck flints and lighted their resinous torches. Cytheris hurried out, her head veiled against the night airs.

Fabullus followed at a distance, careless of the wind or the puddles in which he trod as he marched slowly on, his eyes fastened on the torch-bearers. He thought he knew the house at which the litter finally stopped and into which Cytheris was admitted with a loud noise of bolts and bars removed and then re-fixed. Enquiring at the nearest tavern, he learned that it was the house of Dolabella.

Nor often did Gallus receive an early-morning visitor, and he wondered who it could be. Blinking the waters of sleep from his eyes, Leonidas opened the door and let Amos in.

"I told father I'd go out first thing and buy some nitre he wanted," Amos explained. "So I came to you."

Gallus, still dimly lost in dream-memories, argued with the cogent irrelevance of a man drunk. He possessed no nitrous deposits; he wouldn't sell them if he did; he was the happiest man in the world.

Amos pursed his lips and indicated Leonidas with a great show of secrecy, which annoyed Leonidas extremely. But when Gallus demanded the instant purchase of a small flask of wine, Leonidas had to submit and go, assured that some attack on his character was to be made by the villain Amos behind his back.

Shutting the door, Amos narrowed his eyes, opened his mouth to speak, closed it again, looked under the bed where Gallus was lying, went and peered out of the window, and craned his neck up to make sure that no one was hiding on the roof. Then, rubbing his left eye to extract a piece of grit that had fallen into it from the eaves, he spoke:

"What do you think Karni told me?"

"That you're going to be a father," suggested Gallus, delighted at the suggestion. Everyone should be begetting children.

Amos was taken aback. He considered. Then he dismissed the idea. "Of course not. What do you take me for? If she said so, I'd know it was someone else's. She told me who called on the Queen yesterday afternoon. Thatris told someone else who told her on condition she didn't tell anyone else, and I gave the same promise, so I expect you to keep the secret."

Gallus swore by the hairs of his beloved.

"The consul Antonius visited her," declared Amos, his voice cracking with excitement. "And she washed herself in elephant's milk and rose-water first, and he was with her two hours, and she was all crumpled, and nobody knows what's going to happen."

"Elephant's milk," queried Gallus, who could see nothing extraordinary in a lover's meeting; it was only what ought to be happening everywhere. "Where did she get the elephants from?"

"I wasn't told that," said Amos, somewhat crestfallen.

"Perhaps she brought it with her, or perhaps some have arrived for a show. I may have got that part wrong, but the consul was with her, whether it was elephant's milk or cow-dung." He was irritated at having his effect spoilt.

Gallus was pleased. Antonius was the only one of the past lovers of Cytheris about whom he felt jealous and afraid; and it was good that he should be engrossed elsewhere. He leaped out of bed, breaking the bed-leg that Leonidas had mended with palm-fibre, and dressed himself, splashing water from a small basin over his face. Amos was prattling on, weighed down by the sense of owning grave political secrets.

Up the stairs came the sound of feet; and Leonidas, eager to interrupt a conversation which he was sure aimed at defamation of his character, pushed open the door, but not alone. Behind him entered Fabullus.

"Get out of here," said Gallus to Fabullus. "Because I've bought you a few drinks, it doesn't mean you can make free with my lodgings. Get out."

"Wait a moment," said Fabullus, clucking in a humble manner. "I saw your servant buying some liquor, so I followed him upstairs. But I don't want your drink. I've got my own." Triumphantly he produced a small jar from under his ragged cloak and set it carefully on the floor.

"Take it away," said Gallus.

"Hear me out," said Fabullus, blandly, walking round the jar and then returning to his doorpost. "Judge no man unheard. Hear what I've got to say, and then if you don't look upon me as your best friend, I'll go and take my drink away with me."

"I don't want to hear," said Gallus, wondering why he hadn't hurled the fellow out at once; but he was oppressed by the foreboding of evil that he always got from the presence of Fabullus—something inveterate that wore down his opposition. But to-day of all days he wanted to keep clean and sunlit; at noon he was to see Cytheris again.

"Who do you think called on a certain lady last night?" asked Fabullus, leaning against the doorpost and obtaining a sense of safety from the wine-jar planted on the floor between him and the others. "She's going up in the world." He

paused, noting with joy how Gallus was torn wretchedly by a wish to hasten the disclosure and a wish to shut his ears against it. "The man that called was the consul Antonius."

"You're mad," shouted Gallus. "He spent the afternoon with Cleopatra."

Amos clutched his own head and made agonised gestures to Gallus to keep back the secret which had now been fully revealed. He thus drew more attention to it, and even Leonidas grasped that the subject of gossip was not himself but people socially so distant that he didn't believe in their existence even though he heard about them daily.

"O did he?" Fabullus winked one eye, and having winked it, found difficulty in opening it again. "I knew they were all in it. But he was with your don't-know-what afterwards. I saw him."

"He wasn't," shouted Gallus, louder still. "Out you go!"

"And where do you think she went afterwards?" Fabullus knew that Gallus couldn't bear to throw him out while there was more to hear, more to be tortured with. "In her litter? She went off to the other consul, Dolabella. And she hadn't gone home at dawn. So what do you say to that?"

Gallus ran at him, tore at his clothes, punched him, shouting. Amos and Leonidas in turn grasped Gallus from behind and dragged him away. Fabullus sank to the floor, blubbering. "I only told it for your own good. She's a wicked woman. She wanted me to go to bed with her. We men ought to stand together. Go and ask her if you don't believe me."

Then he noticed Amos, and rose to his feet again. "What's this Jew doing here? Spying on me?" He advanced menacingly, and Amos shrank into a corner. "Your father sent you here. Own up."

"Throw the blackguard out!" cried Gallus, struggling with Leonidas; and Fabullus, seeing that he was liable to be assaulted by all three, retreated quickly, making a dive for his wine-jar, shut the door behind him, and was heard weeping down the stairs.

THE litter in which Cytheris had come back was still outside the door when Gallus turned the corner. At once he knew

the worst. All the way he had repeated to himself that Fabullus was an irresponsible drunken liar; but now he knew the facts. She had not even bothered to deceive him with any care.

The janitor had received no fresh instructions, and let Gallus pass; and without waiting to be announced Gallus broke into the bedroom. Cytheris was bending over a chest, putting a cloak away. She waved a slave-girl out of the room while Gallus eyed her with steady hatred.

"I can't see any kiss-marks this time. At least you thought of me to that extent—or perhaps they're in places that I can't see."

Cytheris saw that he already knew. It didn't matter; it simplified things; she knew intuitively that Fabullus had something to do with the arrival of Gallus. She couldn't have hidden what she'd done, and yet she knew she hadn't contemplated such an early discovery. What she had intended, she couldn't remember; but it wasn't what was happening now.

"I've been to see Dolabella," she said, defiantly.

"And before that Antonius came to see you. O I know all about it." Even in his suffering he couldn't but feel a grim pleasure in thus being able to expose her so thoroughly and so speedily; she must be astonished.

Her heart leaped once, and then she was glad he knew everything. "Yes, my old friend Marcus called after you went. And now I think you'd better leave me. You can still brag in the taverns and tell them how many moles I have, and where."

Gallus by making the first accusations had dominated the situation; and Cytheris felt suddenly that her retort was feeble, that she had merely used his delinquency as a pretext, and that he would see this. But he was staggered, nevertheless, at her words.

"What nonsense are you talking? I've done no such thing . . ." His voice trailed off. Then the memory returned. It was all so long ago, the day before yesterday, the day before he had embraced her; æons past. "But that was before—before I thought you loved me."

She studied his face. "I don't understand. How could you brag about taking me before yesterday?"

He saw the position in which he had landed himself. "I'll tell you the truth. I heard about Dolabella again from Nicias, and was so hurt that I said what he'd been saying—to show that I was as good as he was. I was drinking."

"It doesn't matter. You lied about me in public. What could be worse than that? You're nothing but vanity. You've shown me the kind of person you are. Leave me in peace, if you have a shred of decency left."

He clenched his hands, seeing nothing pathetic this time in her distraught tones. "I won't go. We're both fools, and you're as big a fool as I am. Did your lover the brawny Marcus tell you he'd spent the afternoon with Queen Cleopatra—on the same couch?" He saw that she hadn't known; she drew back with distressfully open mouth. "Yes, with the beautiful Queen. I don't suppose he was worth very much by the time he came here. I suppose that was why you had to go to Dolabella afterwards."

He had hit shrewdly. Cytheris, who had been growing somewhat ashamed, felt angrily stifled. So that was why Marcus had been so respectfully playful; she hadn't minded it while she thought it the result of his oath to Fulvia; but it was different now she knew he had come drained from Cleopatra's couch. The beast. Come to send her off to Dolabella. Could he have shown more obviously what he thought of her, how little he cared? Sending her to another man while still smeared with Cleopatra's kisses. How was it she hadn't sensed the other woman, like a dog a hare-scent? It was stifling her now.

She turned on Gallus, and for the first time in her life wholly lost her head. "You filthy beast!" she cried, beating at him. "You're all the same. Get out before I kill you. Get back to the tavern-slut that you keep in case I frown. You're all liars, beasts, hypocrites—and the worst of all is you with your lying poems and promises. Get out."

Attracted by her cries, the janitor and two more men-slaves dashed into the room; and pleased at the chance of maltreating Gallus, whom they rated as a penniless and obnoxious interloper, they lugged him out, pushed him through the hall, and flung him into the street.

LEFT to herself, she sank back on the bed, sobbing and breathing thickly. She forgot Gallus. It was the lie that Antonius had told her. Perhaps he hadn't lied with words, but he had deceived her; he had thrown her away, coldly given her to another man. Her friendship with him had been the sustaining pillar of her life; he had always been so frank and direct; even when he had left her for his wife, she had felt no anger and he had pretended nothing, she had still felt him a friend in the background. She could never forgive him.

She wanted to hurt him. What could she do? She must do something. He had broken the compact. Why had he come back to her after she had succeeded in putting him aside so happily, come back only to spoil everything? It was all his fault whatever she did. She would do a thing that she had never thought herself capable of doing, a petty spiteful act, the kind of thing that made her loathe being a woman. She had always aimed at a man's virtue, joviality and lack of pettiness; but her life had beaten her. First Gallus and then Antonius. But her trouble with Gallus had been her own fault, and she would have faced and settled it in her own way after a while. The blow from Antonius was outside all the rules of the game.

THE note was left by a slave who protested that it must be handed to Fulvia alone, and then ran away. So the porter explained, and Fulvia weighed the folded and sealed paper in her hand. There was a faint scent of violets and femininity about the letter, and she had a feeling that it would tell her why Antonius had been so guiltily boisterous last night, why he had drunk so much and fallen into a heavy slumber on coming to bed—a slumber from which all her efforts could not rouse him. She had lain tightly clasping him till dawn, when he had been forced to take notice of her; but he had been very distraught, blaming the wine-fumes. Now Fulvia looked at the letter and knew she was about to learn the reason.

Tasting the luxury of delay to the full, she raised the note to her nose, ran it along her lips, felt and crinkled it slowly. Then she snapped the frail red thread, and read the contents. "Did your husband smell of Egypt last night and had Cleopatra tied a golden hair round his loins?" Fulvia had known

she would read something of the kind, though she had not suspected Cleopatra; but to see the words was different from knowing she would see them. She felt blackness pressing down between her eyes, crushing her mind, squeezing the life out of her like a stick thrust down over a worm. Then she recovered and pushed the paper down between her breasts.

Antonius was in a side-room of the hall, talking with his two brothers. He had tentatively spoken of Cæsarion in the Senate and found everyone agreed in hostility to the child's legitimacy. That had vaguely discouraged him, though he had hardly expected a different reception; but the news of his remarks had not yet reached the Carinæ. His brothers, who had not attended the meeting, had not yet heard; and Antonius was postponing the moment of explanation. He was going to say that his suggestion was intended to depreciate Cæsar's will—for who was to pay out the money left to the people? But he knew that Fulvia and his brothers would laugh at this argument, and he felt unhappy.

Fulvia entered with dull staring eyes, went straight across to him, grasped him by the throat, and sank her fingers into the flesh. He tore away, gasping. The suddenness and silence of the attack left Gaius and Lucius stupefied and inert.

With a wrench Antonius got free. "Are you mad, woman?" His throat was badly hurt.

Fulvia had begun to think again. She turned to Lucius. "He was with Cleopatra yesterday."

Lucius said nothing but looked without sympathy at his brother. Gaius tittered. But Fulvia had turned again to her husband.

"Tell me the truth. Admit it."

He was too upset, too dazed to think of denials. He hung his head. "Yes, I was."

Fulvia hit him in the face.

"Look here now," he said, backing. "Don't go too far."

She hit him again, coldly, furiously. He raised his hands, but Lucius spoke.

"Hear what she's got to say."

"I'm not stopping her from talking. But I won't be hit."

There was a deep silence. At last Fulvia said, "Why don't you get out and go to her?"

He answered sullenly, "Because I don't want to."

"I divorce you. Do you hear?"

"I hear you."

His relief was followed by panic. He wanted Cleopatra, but he mustn't be thrown into her arms prematurely. Nothing had been settled, no basis of action built up; he would lose his grip and be flung helpless to the world. The panic grew. He knew only that he must cling to what he already had. Cleopatra wouldn't want him if he came a discredited man.

"Don't be a fool. I won't be divorced. I only went to see her to find out what she was up to."

"Then why didn't you tell me?"

"O you're so suspicious. You wouldn't have believed me."

She laughed scornfully. "Of course I wouldn't. Well, what did she say?"

The words were dragged out of him, fibres torn with red-hot pincers; but speak he must. Her dark, burning eyes, dilated enormously, held him, penetrated through his skull. He was like a man tied to a post under the noonday-sun with eyelids sliced off, pestered by the flies, scared by the light.

"She wants her Cæsarion to be recognised."

"And you promised her to do it."

"I did nothing of the sort."

"O you fool. What else did she say?"

"Nothing else." The eyes tore at him, dragged out the words from his dry mouth. "Only what I said. She wants Cæsarion to be recognised."

"Yes?"

"And she hopes to stage riots here. This Marius . . . she's bribed him, I think. She told me as little as she could. That's all, I swear."

Fulvia still watched him, bending slightly, as if ready to run from a wild beast she was taming. "And so you promised to help her, to join with her. Why don't you go off to her now?"

"I don't want to go. I won't go."

He sweated at the horror of losing the position in which he stood; there was the only safety. What an idiot he'd been. It was all inextricably bound up with Fulvia; he couldn't disentangle it; he'd stand alone, helpless, the mock

to ward off the attack of her eyes.

Those were the words for which she had waited. It was necessary for him to say them in front of his brothers. She caught and tugged at her dress until it fell in rags at her feet.

"I'm not beautiful as she is. Look at me. She hasn't borne the children I've borne. Her limbs are softer and her of everyone, if he lost that grip, if he made a false step in his precarious isolation.

"She's so much more beautiful than I am," said Fulvia, remorselessly. "Why don't you go?"

"It's you I want." He lifted his hands blindly, seeking breasts are firmer than mine. I don't wonder you prefer her to me. Wouldn't you, Lucius?"

She turned with a mixture of appeal and accusation to Lucius, and he drew back, clenching his hands so hard that the nails hurt the palms. He muttered something gutturally, which no one could catch.

Antonius felt sudden courage warming back into his veins. She was only a woman after all. A woman . . .

Without looking at his brothers, he took her in his arms, ignoring her struggles. His two brothers went quickly from the room.

"Go to her," said Fulvia through her teeth, hissing. He kissed her, feeling the wet teeth of her bared mouth as she continued to say, "Go to her." But his mouth clove to hers. He mustn't let her say it aloud. "Go to her." Fulvia was still saying it, he knew; and he wanted to go, but couldn't. Desperately, like a man clinging to a piece of wood in tumbling waters, he clung to Fulvia. He dare not let her go.

IX

A MARTYR TESTIFIES

THE usual crowd were collected round the pillar with its altar in the Forum. A mother had brought her sick child, and pressed his forehead against the stone and bade him touch it with his hands. A girl had whispered a vow and dropped some scraps of unguent. Two soldiers had exchanged pledges over a sale. A man kicked a dog that came up to it and sniffed. A woman clearly with child embraced the pillar, and a young man strewed before it the first clippings of his beard.

Down a side-street came a tramp of feet, and the sound of men chanting. The crowd parted, and Marius, tall, gaunt, clad in a long white robe, appeared, followed by a noisy band of disciples. He raised his hand, spreading a silence throughout the square. His fierce eyes roved over the faces, darkened for a moment and turned inwards, and blazed again. He spoke, holding both arms aloft as if they were nailed to an unseen beam.

"A time there is for worshipping in peace, and a time for worshipping with deeds. Here is the altar of the mighty that has died, the lord that was betrayed. And it is right that you should stand here with love in your hearts. But the world is not a thing of love. The world is evil. It is the world that slew Cæsar. Since the Divine One has made himself a victim, do you not think he thirsts for blood? I tell you that without blood there is no sacrifice, and without a sacrifice there is no god. For the god who is our father demands submission to his will, and that submission is a sacrifice. And to complete that sacrifice blood must be spilt. For in blood all things are contained, life and death, the god and the victim. God calls to you for a sacrifice."

The crowd did not understand his words, but they felt profoundly with all he said, as if he had uttered their inmost

unknowable thoughts. He had been speaking with a tense restraint, in a chant. Now his face grew contorted, and he shouted:

"Do you not know the men who must die? Must I read a list of the names? The men who slew Cæsar are still free to walk the streets of Rome. They laugh in your face. They have stolen from you your most precious thing, and you know it not. They have slain your father, and you say, 'Yes, lord.' They have taken all that is rightfully yours, and you kiss their hands for a modius of corn. But the day of reckoning has come. The murderers shall die, and the earth shall be owned by the disinherited, the poor and the suffering. Offer the sacrifice of blood, I tell you! Cæsar will then come again. The Son of Cæsar!"

His lips oozed with foam. He seemed to grow taller, reaching to the heavens' roof-beam. His eyes were dark flames in his gaunt face. Lowering his hands with a violent wrench, he clasped them together, the knuckles crackling.

A roar came from the crowd. "Death to the murderers!"

The populace swayed and clamoured, and Marius stood with bent head and closed eyes, waiting for the voice that would tell him what next to do. The hubbub increased; and then it became clear that the disorder was not caused entirely by the response to Marius. A space opened at one side, the crowd huddling back, and a detachment of soldiers was seen marching in regular lines towards the altar. At their head strode Antonius, a sombrely set expression on his face. He looked neither to right nor to left, but straight at Marius.

The crowd fell farther away, and the soldiers formed in a square round the altar. As their ranks grew, they pushed the people back, leaving more space in the centre where Antonius and Marius stood silently facing one another.

"Herophilus, also named Amatius, and self-styled Gaius Marius," said Antonius at length, when all the soldiers had debouched into the open space and the crowd had ceased its uproar, "I arrest you on a charge of fomenting violence and conspiracy against the State."

"Marcus Antonius, also known as the Wine-bibber," replied Marius, unmoved. "I come in the name of one greater than you."

"So be it," said Antonius. "But you are here now, and my word is the last word."

There was a growl of indignation from the crowd, and Antonius turned, standing with his back against the altar, a handsome and imposing figure in his bright silver corselet. Beside him, a little to the rear, stood the equally tall Marius, his lean face swarthy above the white of his robe, his eyes once more closed. Why did the voice fail to speak?

"Romans," said Antonius, in clear tones without emotion. "You know I have your interests at heart and that I alone have been faithful to Cæsar. This man here has deceived you. He is an imposter, in the pay of traitors. Trust to me, I bid you. I alone can see that all Cæsar's Acts are carried out and your freedom maintained; and by the Head of Cæsar I swear that you will find me your best friend."

He turned away. Uproar again broke out, some calling for further explanations from Antonius, others demanding that Marius should be allowed to speak, some agreeing with Antonius, others abusing him. But Antonius took no further notice. Still with the set expression which emphasised the thinness of his underlip, he was superintending the guard who had grasped Marius and begun binding his arms behind his back. At the order of Antonius the men pushed the prisoner forward, and the other soldiers closed round, preparing to march out again.

The people were hostile but undecided. They trusted both Antonius and Marius, and couldn't understand what was going on. The soldiers drew their swords, and a space was once more cleared. The columns started to march out, Marius in their midst.

He made no resistance; for the voice had withheld its guidance. "It is written," he said, as they bound him. He did not even look at the populace; and this submissive bearing of his, as much as the show of force, served to disconcert his supporters.

MARIUS stood on the cliff's edge. Below him on the left ran the long stretch of steps up which he had climbed the Capitol. Beside him rose a line of weather-beaten statues. At his back towered the entrance to the Temple of Iuppiter Best and

Greatest. Antonius signed to the guards, and they undid the leathern thongs that bound the man's arms. Across the Capitol heights there stood the lines of soldiers whom Antonius had enrolled, veterans who had no interest in politics and knew Antonius as an old campaigner. They were a trifle puzzled, but otherwise unconcerned. Antonius would see that they got their pay, their donatives, their farms, their medals. What was one mob-orator more or less in the scheme of things?

Marius stood with his arms hanging limply at his side, feeling the blood tingle back into them, burning against the places where the thongs had bitten. Still the voice was silent—as if the presence of Antonius had quenched it, sucked out its power into some greater vortex of being.

"Now," said Antonius, "are you man enough to leap, or must I have you flung over? I give you the chance, unlike the rats I caught a week or so back."

Something in the submissive dignity of Marius appealed to him, frightened a little, made him want to get the execution over quickly.

Suddenly Marius came to life. His face grew livid. He stretched his open hands aloft. The voice was speaking, swelling him up like a bubble about to burst.

"God," he shrieked, "I testify to your death. Break this man like a grain of corn between the upper and the lower millstones. Look into his heart and see the worms of impure motive that gnaw it into pain and frenzy. God omnipotent, make even of this man an instrument of your purpose and your power."

A joyous sense of lightness and might filled him. He was one with his god, with the secret motion of things, and would never die. With a ringing shout, "He will come again!" he threw himself over the rocky ledge.

Antonius watched the body falling, doubled over, the clothes puffing out with the wind of the descent. Then it abruptly flattened out, struck awry. It lay still on the rocks below, amid a few straggly bushes.

With an effort Antonius drew away from the edge, from the fascination of that clutching emptiness of air. He wiped his mouth. That was something done; a crack-brained fool,

good riddance to him. Antonius hated rabble, and the leaders of rabble. Fulvia couldn't say he'd failed to act this time; and the Senate would be vastly pleased; surely the State would settle down now. He wanted things to settle; but he also wanted more action. In action, only in action, did he escape Fulvia.

"Come on, lads," he said, cheerily, to the soldiers, and they reformed, joking with one another.

Down below, a girl had pushed her way through the crowd that gathered in the Vicus Iugarius to watch the execution. She climbed the railings at the foot of the Capitoline steps and entered the strip of ground at the foot of the hill. Two slaves of the police-department were already on the spot, armed with hooks. As she came breathlessly up, they were jabbing the hooks into the dying body of Marius, tearing at the flesh as they sought for a good grip. At the blunt end of the hooks were attached ropes for dragging the body along the ground to be exposed on the Wailing Steps.

"Leave him!" cried the girl. She fell on her knees before the bleeding body and clasped it in her arms. The broken limbs sagged away, and the eyes opened sightlessly for a moment. "Leave him to me," she sobbed.

"You could have him for all I care," said one of the slaves, "but the choice isn't ours. He's jail-meat."

The other slave, however, retreated towards the steps, down which Antonius was coming at the head of the soldiers. After a brief consultation with Antonius, he returned.

"He says you can have the body, but we have to make sure he's dead first."

"That's easy," remarked the first slave. He picked up a heavy stone, bade the girl stand back, and dropped the stone on the head of Marius before the girl realised what he meant to do. She screamed, held by the second slave. The stone-thrower kicked at the corpse, and then walked off with his companion.

"Don't die, don't die," moaned the girl, rocking the body. "Please come back to Jiar, if you don't care for me. What did I do wrong that you left me? Why were you so angry? I'd have died for you."

AFTER Antonius had left to arrest Marius, Fulvia dressed herself, calling for other clothes in place of those she had torn off. She went to her room, sat quietly for a while, and then sent for Lucius. He came, fingering his scarred cheek, a look of dread in his eyes.

"You can have me if you want me," she said, baldly, as if speaking of the weather.

He started forwards, reached out his hand, and touched her face. He shuddered all over.

"You don't want me," he muttered. "It's anger against Marcus."

She gave no answer. Then she spoke, still in a slow frigid voice. "I didn't call you in here to argue with me. I said you can have me if you want me."

He drew back, scowled, and answered her in low pleading tones touched with anger. "You know I've always wanted you. You know that if you'd been anyone else's I'd have stabbed him in the dark. But I love Marcus. I can't do it. Why did you call me in here when you know I can't do it?" His voice rose sharply. "If I could do it now, I could have done it before. Would I have needed to hear you say what you've said?"

She sat with hands dropped weakly in her lap. "I don't know or care about all that. You can have me now if you want me."

He gave her a lingering look of intense hatred and rushed from the room.

ALONG the street went Lucius, uncertain what he meant to do. The blood had hurtled to his head, and he couldn't ease that maddening pressure. He touched the wound on his cheek and recalled the day at Mylasa in Caria when he had fought a gladiatorial duel with a friend as the result of a drunken wager. He had worn the fish-crest of the Myrmilo, and his friend the light armour of a Thracian. Lucius had had his cheek laid open, and the friend had died. Now a wild lust to attack, to break through, was ravaging Lucius.

Under the stress of his memories he turned down the next cross-street, passed along some lanes, and came out before a hall, over the heavy wooden door of which hung a notice

G. ALCIMUS, LUDUS OF GLADIATORS. On the door-posts were fixed wooden squares painted with rough impressionistic skill to depict popular champions at cut and thrust, throwing the net, or giving the death-stab. Lucius looked in at the door a moment, his nostrils twitching. Two girls who had been peeping retreated with little squeals of laughter down the roadway, wondering if he was some new recruit; no, he was too well dressed, he must be a lanista on his day out.

There was no sound of drill or exhibition bouts within. It was a rest-hour. Lucius turned and went across to a tavern from which the noise of rowdy talkers could be heard. He had no motive except a wish to be among men whose mode of living would suit his present temper, whose dress would revivify the memory of that day at Mylasa, when he had killed a man who was dear to him, and when he had enjoyed the killing. Sometimes he awoke at night out of a dream when the dead man kneeled on his chest and held the blade to his heart, and dreadfully the dead man's face was his own. Never had he so regretted an action.

Entering the tavern, he saw among the drinkers half a dozen gladiators dressed in oddments of armour. Two of them had kept their swords. The hands of Lucius stirred anxiously. Why had he come? The dream would come closer now, the dead man's knee would break through his breastbone some night. But at least these fellows were hearty livers, untroubled by the glare of death that beat on their pitiful days; beasts that tore at the raw flesh of life; his brothers. And he needed something to drink. The hot pressure around his head had grown worse.

He approached the table where the men sat on a bench. They looked up inquiringly, and he flung some coins on the board.

"Wine all round," he said. "That's a good enough introduction, I hope. Wine asks no questions."

The men moved up to give him a place.

"Unless it's over-watered," said one. "In which case it talks loud enough and asks for the landlord to have his back scratched with a thorn-whip."

"No need to ill-treat the landlord here," squawked a little man, bustling forward. "My wine's the best in Rome—for

the price, that is. You can't expect to drink gold at a copper a time. But I'm not like the fellow down the road who makes water in the wine, and says it helps the maturing."

"I knew a man," said a gladiator with the end of his nose cut off, "who sold the best wine I ever drank, and he made his stuff good by keeping a frog in the cask."

"There's a certain amount of truth in that," said the landlord, nodding his head wisely. "But a frog isn't necessary; and if it dies on you, it means bad luck."

Lucius drank deep. The gladiators accepted him without concern, though noting his rich-looking tunic; but they were used to the company of young bloods. They started arguing about the merits of the latest trainer and joking about his strict ways. How long would it take him to find out they'd slipped across the road for a drink? Lucius went on drinking. Why had he come? But, worse than that question was the other: Could he ever go back to the house in the Carinæ? Now that Fulvia had offered herself, he couldn't keep his emotions muffled up any longer. Damn the woman. But he couldn't face Marcus if he took her. Something would have to snap inside him. The tension was getting worse; his head burned fearfully, as if his scalp was lifting off.

One of the men talked about a girl who admired him to distraction, a mime-actress named *Ææa*, with cheeks as red as paint and breasts like pears.

"I know her," said Lucius, jerkily. He had never heard of the girl before. "I slept with her last night."

"You're a liar," said the gladiator. "You're so crooked you couldn't spit straight."

"Tell her to have her toe-nails cut," scoffed Lucius. "Or you'll have to take your sword to bed to keep things even."

"Shut up," said the man, angrily, a little uneasy at quarrelling with a social superior; he might only earn a flogging if complaints were laid. "I won't have her talked about and laughed at. She's a good girl, and I don't care who knows it."

Lucius stared into the man's face insolently. "O you're the fellow she spoke of." The man was a tough easterner with flattish face and nostrils. "She said she sat on your face in the dark, and that's why your nose stopped growing."

With a howl of rage the man sprang up, forgetting all about

social status and tugging out the sword from a comrade's belt. Lucius dodged back, slipped round the side of the table, and drew the sword from the belt of the other armed man.

"Fair play!" he cried, and the man let him draw the blade.

The landlord screeched and tried to interpose, but the gladiators shoved him back and he fell against the counter, upsetting some cups that toppled on his face. The other drinkers ran for the door, except for two more adventurous porters who came up grinning and stood behind the watching gladiators.

The man whom Lucius had insulted swung his sword. Lucius leaned aside, then swung his own sword back and contemptuously hit the man on his shoulder with the flat of the blade as he stood swaying off his balance. The tap infuriated the gladiator, but made him more careful. The two men fenced agilely, circling round, urged on by the jests and applause of the onlookers. The gladiator was a newcomer to the school, and he hacked and thrust with ungainly violence. Lucius had no difficulty in parrying or catching the blows on the guard of his sword. The man, blinded with rage at the jeers of his comrades, ceased circling round, stood panting for a moment, and then hurled himself at Lucius, whirling his sword recklessly. Lucius caught the blade, turned it aside, and, while the man swerved, shortened his own guard, and buried the sword-point in the man's throat.

There was a howl of exasperation from the other gladiators. They made to charge Lucius, but he had the only other sword. Quickly he drove the men back, cleared his passage to the door, and broke through. Once in the street he flung the sword down, startling a beggar who had come to take up his post at the door, and ran across the road. He darted up a lane, and in a few moments had gained a crowded thoroughfare. There, noticing a barber's shop, he decided to have a wash.

REACHING home, he found that Antonius was still out. He no longer felt the band of heat round his brow, and knew what he must do. He no longer feared the eyes of his brother, but feared the threat of a woman offered but untaken.

Fulvia was still in her room, seated with hands loosely held in her lap.

"Say what you said before," said Lucius, masterfully standing before her.

"You can take me now if you want me."

He beat his breast in exultation of strength. "I'm yours, all yours, Fulvia. I've burned out everything else. I'm yours. Every drop of blood in my body is yours."

"I knew you would come back," she said, and rising, placed her hands on his shoulders. "Shall I say yet again what I have said?"

He shuddered and leaned over her to kiss her loose mouth.

"I THINK we ought to stay," said Cassius.

Servilia fluttered her eyelids nervously. She had done her best to keep Brutus from meeting his sister Tertulla, for she dreaded lest Tertulla would make some reference to Servilia's confession of love for Cæsar; but it had been impossible to stop this conference at the house of Cassius. The conference was necessary, and Cassius couldn't leave Tertulla. Brutus had come with a strong guard, hastening down unfrequented streets. Even during the lull before the advent of Marius it had been highly dangerous for the two prætors to go outside their doors; now the populace were growing rowdier daily again. The stress had told heavily on both men; but as soon as Cassius learned that Brutus wanted to leave Rome, he saw only the arguments against such a step.

"Now that Antonius has executed Marius, things will quieten down. More importantly, we know now that we can trust Antonius."

"You said things would quieten down when the funeral-riots ceased," said Brutus. "Then they got worse. Matters like this go by waves, and each wave is worse. There'll be another lull now, and then a worse outbreak."

"I think Marcus is right," said Servilia with her air of impartiality that annoyed Cassius; for she always used it to support Brutus. "There's no point in exacerbating the mob. Now that Antonius has come out so splendidly for law and order, there's no reason why you both shouldn't go. No good will be done by staying. I'll negotiate with Antonius and see that you both get worth-while provinces for next year. Don't forget that Decimus has been accepted by the army in

Cisalpine Gaul. That means everything. Rome must be left to exhaust itself. Neither of the consuls-elect are extremists, and Decimus is to be consul for the year after."

There was no gainsaying her facts, but Cassius felt uneasy.

"All you say is true, but things aren't moving any longer by the obvious road. There are too many indeterminate factors. If Rome is abandoned, anything might happen. We ought to stay. We're the only leaders left for our party."

Brutus wavered; he felt that Cassius was right; they'd have to stay, however unpleasant it was. But Tertulla, who had been lying on a couch at the side, wriggling her toes, interrupted.

"O leave Rome to us women. Mother will manage the Senate."

Servilia breathed again after finding that Tertulla had made no exposure, but Brutus spoke with lowering brows.

"Mother, I think you ought to surrender that estate in Campania you were given by Cæsar. Also that house at Neapolis."

Servilia's mouth closed firmly. "They weren't given to me. I bought them. At the auctions."

"That's as bad. You got them for almost nothing. And whatever you paid, we can't have people saying we bought up the property of ruined patriots." He had heard a man in the street singing a lampoon on the subject, but didn't like to admit himself affected by such trivialities.

"I won't give them up," replied Servilia. "There's no reason whatever for doing so. It would merely look guilty and draw attention. Somebody had to buy the places."

"What about that magnificent pearl Cæsar gave you?" asked Tertulla, mockingly. "It was far bigger and richer than the one I had till Gaius stole it." Servilia drew away, a hand over her eyes; she knew what was coming. Tertulla went on: "But men don't understand women. We hate to part with things our lovers once gave us."

"Lovers! What do you mean?" asked Brutus, tartly.

"Cæsar and our mother," replied Tertulla, with a laugh. "Though personally I can't comprehend how a woman could ever betray a man that she'd once taken to bed—unless he did something wicked to her, like stealing her pearls—and Cæsar was always so good to our mother, wasn't he?"

Brutus stood aghast. "What are you talking about, Tertulla? What madness . . ." His gaze sought Servilia, and he saw her admission of the truth; and with an agonising twist of emotion he knew that he had always known it, that it had been the bitterest thing in his life.

"Mother——" he said, in a strained voice, painful to hear. Memories rushed over him. Of course he had always known it. How had he hidden from it so long? Why then had she acquiesced . . . He fought to understand. It was all too complex. He fought to hold down a covering over his exposed mind, to press out of consciousness the struggling thoughts and gibbering dark faces of emotion. Now he could never touch his mother again, never look a man in the face; he was befouled.

Cassius stared gloomily at the mother and her children. It was all beyond his comprehension, wretchedly embarrassing and disgraceful. He walked out of the room.

"Mother," said Brutus, in a choking voice. He couldn't believe it after all; it was impossible. Why didn't she deny it?

"Don't, don't," cried Servilia, for once without sympathy for her son's suffering. "Don't ask me anything. Don't judge me. Don't think about it. I love you more than anything in the world."

Tertulla was overcome with remorse. "I didn't mean to say it. O I'll bite my tongue out."

But neither of the others heard her. Brutus sank down on his knees before his mother, and laid his head on her lap. He couldn't think; he didn't want to think; he must forget it all; nothing had happened; he was pure of heart and hand; he had thought only of Rome.

HALF an hour later Cassius was called back into the room. To his relief no reference was made to the scene from which he had fled.

Brutus paced about the floor. "We've talked things over, and it's best for you and me to go. There's no doubt of it."

Cassius did not demur this time; he was too disheartened.

"Very well; I'll ask Antonius for another interview—or at least to send a note verifying his promise to get Marcus leave of absence."

Servilia rose energetically. "I'll set to work about arrang-

ing that decree for the provincial appointments." Ever since the murder she had become her old brisk political self, intriguing among the senatorial families, holding a salon, and ordering the votes of a section of the Senate.

After Brutus and Servilia had gone, Cassius asked Tertulla for an account of what had passed while he was out of the room.

"O they wept of course, and talked about virtue being its own reward or something. And Marcus had a fit of the horrors, and mother kissed him on the brow and swore she'd only had a sisterly interest in Cæsar. And I almost died of shame. I was frightened to breathe lest they'd notice me, and the baby gave me a most awful kick inside, as if he objected to the family I was giving him. Don't you think I've got the most ravishing toes? And I don't care what the season is, you've simply got to get me some plums."

AMMONIOS and Sara stood cowed. As Cleopatra turned away for a moment to pick up a silver hand-mirror and stare at the reflection of her face on its polished surface, they exchanged a glance of suspicious self-commiseration.

She recovered herself, returned to where they stood, and spoke to Sara. "Go on."

"I bribed one of the slaves. I met him in the back lane, throwing out some rubbish. He told me that his master and mistress had had a quarrel of some kind. One of the girls said in the servants' quarters that she looked through the curtains of a side-room after the quarrel, and they were lying on the floor there."

"The floor!"

"I was surprised. The man told me there wasn't any couch in the room—if that's an explanation."

Cleopatra looked again in the mirror, brushing back her hair and parting her mouth to show the small even teeth. So Fulvia had somehow got him back. She, Cleopatra, had known it was a risk to tell him what she had told; but it was the only way to gain him, if he was to be gained. The prophet Marius was no use alone; and she was sure that Antonius, on leaving her, had been genuinely roused. She had said more perhaps than necessary, for she had felt more drawn to him than she expected; he wasn't only a bullying

vinous swashbuckler; there was a fineness somewhere in him, but a fibre of cowardice too. The failure of her plans hadn't come because she said too much. Some unforeseeable accident had spoiled things; and he had confessed to Fulvia. Perhaps the woman had spies to follow him everywhere.

But what was Cleopatra to do now? Nothing definite could be achieved without some commanding man whom she could use. Perhaps Dolabella would serve. But her heart sank. No, Antonius was the man, and he was a coward. But she wouldn't give in yet.

"Find as many agents as you can for working on the mob. Pay them well. Bid them preach two things: Revenge Cæsar, and give Cæsar's son his inheritance."

Some day she would have her reckoning with Antonius. He was a coward, and yet he had unsealed her body; he had drawn out of her something that even Cæsar had not awoken. Perhaps it was the months of abstinence, the shock of Cæsar's death, the re-knitting of purpose and hope on a more daring determination, the mingled fineness and physical power of the man; but never before had she surrendered as to him. And the coward had gone and told his wife.

Ammonios and Sara, seeing that she had no more orders to give, saluted and bowed their way out, loathing each other more thoroughly than ever after being rebuked in one another's presence.

A NECKLACE of gold with a pendant of large rubies and emeralds, and a pearl set in silver. Gallus looked at the jewelry glittering in his lap and tried to realise that he had won it with a few throws of the dice. The things looked alive, a nest of serpents, stinging with barbs of light.

The man with whom he had been playing rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Someone cheated," he shouted, and flung the dice-box on the floor. "And it couldn't have been me, since I've lost everything I had in the world."

"There wasn't any cheating," said one of the bystanders. "You deserved to lose for boasting like you did. The fellow was only playing you for a few silver pieces, and it was you that slapped the jewels down and talked big."

Gallus, sobered and hypnotised by the snakish gleam of the gems, took another drink of the red wine and looked round the tavern helplessly.

The loser advanced toward him with threatening fists. "Hand it all back."

Gallus stared at the jewelry and decided that he didn't want it; he had never owned any such things before, and the ownership seemed sinful; the gems were alive with baleful fires, glints of forked light, tongues of evil greed and vanity. It wasn't as if he could even give them to Cytheris now. But the thought of Cytheris roused him to an angered sense of his rights; he wouldn't be defrauded.

"I won them," he said. "Leave me alone."

The watchers, loafers and cut-throats who yet had a deep sense of the proprieties of gambling, murmured their agreement. They closed in and pushed the man back. Gallus, realising at last the value of his win, hastily wrapped it in a fold of his tunic, out of sight, and called to the bar-tender.

"Free drinks for everyone here."

There was a shout of approval at this tactful suggestion, and the disgruntled loser was ejected contumeliously.

Gallus felt an urgent need to get home and sleep. If he were to drop off asleep here, he would never wake. Weariness settled on him leadenly; his stomach felt hot and slowly turning over and over. But he managed to reach the bar and beckon to the landlord.

"I'm going home," he said, placing all his money carefully on the counter, coin beside coin—having a vague idea that it looked more that way. "Give everybody drinks, and lend me six slaves to see me home. Two with torches."

"That's all I've got," grumbled the man. "Have you far to go?"

"Not at all," said Gallus, who had no notion where he was. "Only round the corner. I'll recommend your house to thousand friends. Come on. Look at all th' money."

"I can make it four," said the landlord, "and I'll give them good strong clubs. I'm not saying that you aren't a man wise to the ways of a wicked world."

It was as well that Gallus bargained for the escort. Round the corner waited the losing gambler and a friend, both with

knives; but the slaves with their clubs laid out one man senseless in the mud, and the other ran away screaming, while Gallus leaned against a shutter and laughed feebly.

In this way Gallus reached home in safety; and a worried Leonidas put him to bed, astonished to find a little heap of jewels clatter upon the floor as he drew off the tunic.

"Jewels," murmured Gallus. "Stars dropped from her eyes. Her glittering sweat. Snakes. Hang them from her nose. Bore a hole through her to hang them on. Throw them out of the window. Trash."

Reverently, with bulging eyes, Leonidas hid the treasure under the small stove. Then he spent the rest of the night thinking of better places and shifting the treasure round, afraid that every creak of the wood partitions and flooring, every scurry of mice, was a robber come at last.

"WHAT would you do if the Queen was to leave Rome and take me away?" asked Karni.

"I'd weep," replied Amos, lifting his head to place his mouth close to her ear. The narrow bed rattled so loudly, and the men below clanged so shatteringly, that it was hard to converse otherwise.

"Would you call that manly?"

"No," said Amos, honestly. "But what else could I do?"

He tried to spread out his hands to illustrate convincingly how helpless and hopeless the situation would be, and fell out of bed. And Karni, though a good-natured girl, was glad he had fallen out.

Lucius came closer to Fulvia and passed his hand up her wide sleeve so that it rested on her bare shoulder-blade as he clasped her.

"I found the two fellows," he whispered. "Two rogues I've used before. I gave them the full instructions. They know all they have to do. I've promised them ten thousand each and a farm at Casilinum."

"But only if they kill her. Only if they kill her."

Lucius moved his fingers caressingly up and down her spine, which arched under the touch. "I've told them that. Now you and I are going to take charge of Marcus for his

own good." His mouth was hot against her ear. "You're the only woman for me. I'd like to be flayed if my skin was used to make slippers for your feet. I'm so jealous of you that if you were to have a child by me I'd drink all the milk of your breast with my own mouth. Every time Marcus goes near you I feel wounds opening in the palms of my hands."

THE two men sat drinking in a small front-room on the second floor of a tenement-house. Gaius Barcha and Publius Blattius were their names. Barcha was a squat man with black hair cut in a fringe across his forehead; Blattius a thin man with one ear like a cankered crab-apple and a hooked nose.

They clinked cups and continued with their plans. "Stick-her will be easy," said Barcha. "It's getting in that will take the time and sweat the brains out of the top of our heads."

"I understood what he told us, even if you didn't. It's lucky there's one of the two of us with more use for his ears than growing wax in them. It's like this." He sketched some lines on the table with wine-wetted finger. "The sleeping-rooms are along here. Now there's a window at the end of this hall that opens into a clothes-cupboard. All the guards will be at the other end of the hall. Unless one of us treads on the other, or unless she has the captain of the guard sleeping with her to keep ghosts away, it'll be as easy as making an apple roll downstairs."

"Well, don't go making any swipes in the dark unless you know what you're about. I haven't forgotten yet how you stuck me in the knee that night on the Appian Way. I still can't walk like a man with nothing on his conscience."

"O don't bring up the grey-headed past. I've learned a lot since then."

Suddenly, putting his cup down with great care, Barcha laid his finger to his lip, tiptoed to the door, threw it open, and disclosed his wife listening with an ear to the latch-hole.

"Come on right in, my darling," he said, catching her by the lobe of her ear.

"I wouldn't give you away," she whined, a buxom woman with only one front tooth. "You're my husband, aren't

you? I only wanted to know what you were up to. I thought it might be women."

"So it is," chuckled Barcha. "Or rather, not women in a kicking heap like you suggest—but one very particular woman. Her and nobody but her. I'm going to tickle her with the nasty end of my knife. Perhaps you object to it." His chuckle deepened to a guffaw. "Don't you think a man ought to stick any woman but his own lawful nuisance, eh?"

Blattius pointed to the cowering wife. "What are you going to do about her? I'm not her husband, and I wouldn't trust her if I was. Women were born with their tongues hanging loose like a dog's tail. They say things and think about it afterwards."

"Don't you worry," said Barcha, condescendingly as to a bachelor unaware of the more recondite arts of woman-control. He pushed his wife down on the low table, and, hauling some rope out of a basket, proceeded to tie her wrists behind her back; then he tied her ankles together.

"What if she screeches?" remarked Blattius. "Haven't you ever heard a woman screech?"

"I thought of that," said Barcha, grudging his friend any insight on the subject of wives. He tore a strip up the back of his wife's dress, turned her over, and thrust the strip into her mouth. Then he tore another strip, this time from the front, and bound it round her face to stop her from spitting out the first strip. Then he turned her over again, and stood back to admire his handiwork, dusting his hands.

"Don't she look like a good job of work?" he said. "Well, old girl, now you can listen to your heart's content, and I'll take the ropes off you when we come back. Don't roll off the table, because you'll only hurt the floor. When I tie a person up, they stay tied."

Leaning across the table, he rested his cup in the small of his wife's back and conversed with his friend across the gagged and bound body. The woman lay still, breathing stertorously through her nose.

THE clue to it all lay in Cleopatra's garden. Fabullus was sure of it. The way Gallus had spoken of Antonius visiting

Cleopatra, and the terror that the remark had caused in Amos, was sufficient proof. Everyone was in the conspiracy, whatever it was, to defraud Fabullus—Gallus, Cytheris, Antonius, Ezra, Leonidas, Dolabella, the beggar-boys at the bridge-head, and Cleopatra. The conspiracy was against Fabullus; else why had Cytheris tried to bribe him with that purseful of money? That was the only explanation of her act. She was frightened and trying to divert him from the search; but she'd only made him keener. The person to whom all the trails led was Cleopatra, and he meant to clear up that part of the mystery next. Then he'd be able to lodge a claim with the prætor for the fullery stolen from him by Jewish tricks. The case would astound all Rome. He hadn't lived in vain.

Well filled with wine, he had been watching the garden for about eighteen hours, on and off; and he'd seen a number of suspicious exits and entrances, but nothing else. However, he couldn't see much over the wall, and the Ethiopian had grabbed him when he tried to look through the gate. His wine-stinking breath had helped him out that time; the Ethiopian grinned and gave him a kick; but to Fabullus the release merely meant that they were frightened of him. If he'd been Cleopatra, he'd have given orders for Fabullus to be chased out of sight at the very least. It never occurred to him to question whether Cleopatra had heard of Fabullus. Didn't he have proof that she was in the plot with everyone else?

But he took more care after meeting the Ethiopian. There was no point in giving away what he knew. So he lurked among the bushes that covered a part of the river bank opposite the garden-wall. Dusk came on, with a few shivery stars, and a light blurred through the yellow curtain of the half-shuttered window in the Ethiop's lodge. A smell of cooking drifted on the breeze. Fabullus blew on his hands and was inclined to make another visit to the nearest tavern; but he had a feeling that developments were to be expected, and resisted the call of his belly. He wasn't altogether unprovided for, however; and he took out a hunk of bacon that he'd been carrying tied in a knot of his shirt. He gnawed the bone hungrily and wished he'd brought some

cheese; he was a rich man now with the purse of Cytheris and could afford food as well as drink. But he didn't dare leave his post. Something was going to happen. Tonight he'd expose everything.

He had watched for hours that afternoon a piece of the wall where some stones had been dislodged. With care the wall could be easily climbed. When he had finished the bacon, he mumbled a charm against Jewish sorcerers and threw the bone into the water. Jews worshipped a swine-god; for the forbidden was sacred, and the sacred was the god. Fabullus began to feel uneasy in the dim quiet murmurous with flowing water. He shouldn't have thrown the bone into the river. The river-god mightn't like it; perhaps he was reaching up with cold, clammy hand to drag Fabullus down into the depths.

Fabullus emerged hurriedly from his bush lair and approached the wall. Yes, it was quite easy to climb. In a few moments he was standing in the garden and had made no sound beyond breaking off one small fragment of stone and mortar. There was a faint glow from the front of the villa. He moved cautiously towards it, feeling his way with his hands and going down on all-fours if he grew doubtful. In the front of the house he could see no means of spying, and he heard two guards walk down to the lodge. He moved on, and his feet drew a crackling noise from a gravel-path; he sank back, trembling, into a bush, regardless of the thorns. But no one came, and he crept round to the other side of the house. Here, through a chink in a shutter, he gazed into a small room where he saw two men wrestling, he thought at first. Muttering to himself a spell against fascination, he turned away; and, drawn by the smells that made his belly heave with delicious longing, he neared the kitchen. But that was asking for discovery. Scullions were hastening about, throwing out basins of water; and once a girl and a lad sliddered through a door, giggled and huddled together, and then sliddered back.

Fabullus lay down in a flower-bed, dimly comforted by the sweet odours. His feet had bruised some mint, and that more pungent smell mixed with the flower-scents. Time faded past, waving a slow flag of stars. He couldn't tell if it was a

few moments or several hours ago that the huddling pair had giggled; he looked round to make sure they weren't still there. He lost count of the coins falling across his mind, all the wealth that he had lost, the money that he would claim when at last he produced his completed case before the prætor.

Then he heard someone coming near, not from the house, but along the garden lawn. He pulled himself up on his hands and knees. At last he was on the track.

THERE were two errors in the calculations of Barcha and Blattius as they fumbled at the little shuttered window. First, Fabullus was hovering at their rear; and secondly, in the closet was sleeping Karni on a floor-bed improvised on account of the limited accommodation. However, she didn't hear the shutter opened; for, tired out with work—tramping to the markets and lying with Amos above a world of clattering iron—she carelessly hadn't fixed the shutter-bolt after letting some air into her stuffy cubicle. Thus the invaders found the window less trouble than they had expected. Blattius, as the thinner man, climbed on Barcha's shoulders, thrust a leg through, and then lifted the other leg after. He wriggled for a moment with both legs swinging about inside. Then he slid down with a ripping sound that announced the end of his tunic. He dropped to the floor, and to his surprise found something warm and soft stirring beside him and trying to sit up. (As he put it later to his friend, it was like standing on some fresh cow-dung in the dark and discovering it was a live bull.) With practised instinct, he at once found the throat of the stirrer with his fingers, though he was terrified and could see nothing.

Karni was still half asleep. She tried to cry out, and was astonished to find that she made only a feeble croaking sound. Her hands went up to tear away the hands of the unknown assailant of darkness. For some unexplained reason she thought it was Amos, and wanted to point out that it was unnecessary to throttle her, for she'd give him all her savings, which were far more considerable than she'd confessed.

It was then that Fabullus made the diversion which rescued Karni. Not that that was his purpose. He was

feeling his way along the wall, looking for the door through which he expected the messengers to be admitted; and he grasped hold of Barcha, who was standing on tiptoe and trying to peer through the window-hole. Barcha had a knife in his belt, and in a flash his hand whipped it out and plunged it into the nearest part of Fabullus, which happened to be the stomach. Taking no chances, Barcha pulled out the knife and struck again. Fabullus fell to the ground, letting out a scream of pain, surprise, and terror. In the darkness he could not see the wounds, but pressed at them with searching hands. Something sticky was pouring out, tearing at him.

The scream stopped Blattius at his work of systematically throttling Karni. He let her go and stood up, diving for the window. It was very small, and he stuck there, unable to get the necessary lift.

"Pull me through," he called to Barcha, waving the one arm that he'd managed to get through, twisting and squirming vigorously. One of his heels hit Karni in the face, and she fell back. The full outrage of this night-assault awoke in her. She grasped at the ankle swinging before her, and pulled, shrieking her loudest; and then, dissatisfied with a mere tugging match, she caught the man's calf in her teeth and bit with strenuous appetite. At the same moment, Barcha, realising that he had disposed of his attacker, grasped his friend's arm and hair, and dragged against Karni.

The noise had roused the house, but no one could place at first where it was coming from; and this delay preserved Blattius. For, Karni, in her eagerness to bite had relaxed her grip, and with a great wrench Barcha pulled him through. Blattius fell on the prostrate Fabullus, who groaned thinly. Then the two night-birds took to their heels and fled across the garden.

CLEOPATRA was sitting up in bed, naked to the waist against which the dyed woollen sheets reached, while half a dozen girls cowered at the foot of the bed. She had thrust one hand under the pillow, where she found and held a dagger. Sara entered with a centurion in silver armour.

"An interrupted burglary, your Majesty," said Sara, with a frown which conveyed that he took the interruption more seriously than his words.

"Have the guards caught the man?"

The soldier stammered, a young officer—princeps prior of the ninth cohort—who had been lent with some legionaries by Cæsar to Cleopatra during her stay. "Your Majesty . . ." Why didn't she dress herself? He was used to seeing girls with as little between them and the lamplight in a lupanar; but he was shocked at such negligence in a Queen and couldn't compose his thoughts. Besides, he knew he'd been lax in his guard-work; all these riots and goings-on were so distracting. "No one thought of that small window. . . . A girl sleeping there. . . . My men are examining the garden and the river bank."

"As well examine my bed," said Cleopatra, harshly. "Go. I'll speak to you tomorrow."

The centurion went out, scowling zealously and almost sorry the men hadn't got through to slide a blade between her dainty rib-bones. She looked at Sara.

He winced. "I should have thought of it. Too simple altogether. Somebody must have inquired about the lay-out of the house—a common burglar or somebody high up. There's a dying man outside. Would you like to see him?"

"Bring him in. Also the girl who made the noise."

Karni was waiting at the door, and entered at Sara's call, followed by four men bearing Fabullus on a stretcher.

Cleopatra looked at Fabullus, at his grimed and bloated face. "Who stabbed him?"

Sara raised his brows. "I can't understand. None of our men. He seems to have disturbed the others. I don't know him."

A bearer lifted the head of Fabullus with his hand. Fabullus looked at Cleopatra, and with the flickering pulse of his life made a great effort to solve things. "The Queen . . ." He paused. "I saved everyone. I knew she was in it too." He tried to explain. "The Jews beat me."

Then the last drops began to ebb through his heart. He tried to struggle up. "May I kiss . . . hand."

Cleopatra rose, sliding off the bedclothes, and lifted out

her hand to the dying man. He seemed to have saved her somehow; there was no harm in giving him her hand; after all he was striving to rise to the occasion. Standing naked beside the blood-stained Fabullus, she graciously smiled and put her hand to his lips. If a gesture was worth doing, it was worth doing well.

He pressed a feeble mouth against her frail plump fingers. "Died like antique Roman. Father great general." Would she understand? "Give me public funeral and marble tomb." He felt at last he had achieved something tremendous; her cool white body dazzled in his eyes, Venus in her cloud of light. He stared at her imploringly. "Huge marble tomb."

She nodded, and he sank back. A thousand worms were gnawing at his stomach, but all that was very, very, far away. Closer was the great bliss of Cleopatra's whiteness. At last the world had recognised him. Eternal marble washed by the rains of heaven. Then both pain and bliss whirled up towards his head, two snakes twining round a caduceus, and to the sound of trumpets in his ears he died.

The sound was his death-rattle. A shudder racked his body, and he lay still, the blood from his wound dripping through the canvas of the stretcher and staining the pale blue carpet.

"Take him out," said Cleopatra, "and throw him into the river."

Then she turned wearily to Karni. "What do you know about it all, child?"

Karni, resenting somewhat the address of child from one only a few years her senior, determined not to minimise her own part. "I was sleeping quietly and thinking how happy I was to serve your Majesty, when someone came kicking his legs through the window; and before I knew where he was, he had me by the throat and was rolling all over the floor with me. I'm sure I'll have an awful sore throat. That was more than I could stand, for I'm a respectable girl. So I hit him back and called out as loud as I could. When he saw the kind of girl I was, the coward got up and tried to climb back through the window. So I pulled him and bit a piece out of his leg, but someone else pulled harder, or else

his foot came off in my hand, I forget which. But he escaped through the window, and I don't mind a bit now I see you safe and sound, though I'll never sleep in a room with a window again as long as I live unless there's bars on it."

The girl obviously hadn't the least notion of what had happened, but she had contributed to the rout of the assassins. Cleopatra drew a heavy gold bracelet, studded with pearls and emeralds, from her wrist and handed it to her.

"Go and sleep better this time," she said, and turned away before Karni could carry out her intention of seizing the royal hand and covering it with kisses. Then she spoke to Sara, "Take everyone out, except Thatris. Put guards at both doors of the room and along the passage. Come to me at dawn tomorrow morning."

She climbed back into the tall bed with carved posts, refusing the help of her girls. "Leave the lamp alight," she said to Thatris, who stayed behind as the others trooped out in subdued excitement. "Lie here at my side, not at the foot of the bed."

She wasn't afraid; it wasn't the first time that knives had neared her body; but the experience took something of the brightness from life, at least for a while. What was the use of staying any longer at Rome?

"Thatris, do you remember the view out over the harbour at Alexandria, and the seagulls above the island in the dawn-light, and the lanterns in the house-boats on the canal of a summer's night?"

"O yes, I do," said Thatris, wistfully.

"I think we'll leave Rome to-morrow," said Cleopatra, with a sudden easing of her emotions; and Thatris gave a little cooing sound and pressed against her royal mistress, forgetting all her awe, as if they were only two of the girls-in-waiting telling each other about their lovers after the fatigues of the day.

Cleopatra had made up her mind. Nothing could be done at Rome. Antonius was definitely the slave of Fulvia; and he was the only man at Rome with real power, the power in the hands and the voice and the brightening eyes which Cleopatra recognised. She could not and would not make a truce with Cæsar's murderers; there was nothing to do but

depart before Fulvia used some night of riot for a more efficiently-staged assassination. Cleopatra had no doubt about the meaning of the night's interruption. She knew Fulvia by herself—a part of herself, any way. Antonius wasn't worth it; no man was worth it, now that Cæsar was dead. Yet Antonius had slaked her with a passion greater than she had known before; he was not unlike a coarse version of Alexander; but he wasn't a world-conqueror, or he wouldn't have gone back to Fulvia. Let him go.

"Tell me what you think about love?" she murmured to Thatris; but Thatris hid her head beneath the sheets where a frail, milky light percolated. Then she looked out again shyly.

"Don't tell me then," Cleopatra went on. "Keep your secret. Keep it as long as you can, Thatris. Tell it to your lover, for he won't hear your words. He'll be too busy seeing himself reflected in your eyes. But perhaps you haven't any secret, you wise, silent, little thing. Perhaps none of us have. Perhaps there's only the lie that the mirror tells of a light behind the eyes and a mask of beauty behind the face."

Her voice was sad. So Thatris, who couldn't understand what she was saying, was sad also, and wished that she could console her; but she knew she wasn't a clever girl, and held her tongue, thinking of Hilarion and the golden hairs on his chest. It was really hard to see why people were sad when there was so much to be happy about in the world.

GALLUS was now used to early visits from Amos; and he was therefore unsurprised when Amos tumbled up the stairs and banged on the door till Leonidas, quaking for the hidden jewelry, admitted him after reprimands from Gallus. Gallus had forgotten all about the jewelry and was vacantly pondering in misery over the loss of Cytheris. What a fool he was. If ever he had a chance to make things up again, he wouldn't criticise her by word or look; she could have a world of lovers besides him, if she only took him at times; he felt very pathetic and humble and wronged—and underneath his emotion argued that such devotion would surely earn undeviating fidelity. If only he was willing to let her have other lovers, surely she'd be true to him alone.

Amos was ruffled. His hair had lost its glossiness; his nose looked sharper and longer; his dress was untidily donned; his hands seemed loose at the wrists as he gesticulated. He was inconsolable. He had lost Karni for ever, though the worst part of it all was her strange indiscretion in sending a note to the fullery, where Ezra might easily have intercepted it. Luckily, Ezra had been busy, and Amos had been looking up and down the street to see if anyone had dropped anything during the night—as they sometimes did, Amos having in the past found coins, a half-empty wine-jar, a girl's shift, and a parrot chained to a boot.

Gallus picked out of this story the part that touched him most deeply, and that was the news of Karni's departure. He had never seen Karni, but felt strongly for Amos. It was too horrible. No happiness anywhere. After shedding tears and being duly pacified, Amos smiled again and went off; and Gallus tried to eat some barley cakes that Leonidas had bought last night and now warmed on the stove. The cakes were dry and unpalatable. Gallus groaned for some watered wine; and Leonidas, who was proud of being able to pour out both wine and water simultaneously without confusing the proportions, reached for the utensils. Then his heart failed him. He couldn't remember where was the last place in which he'd put the jewels for safety. Dropping the copper jug, he dashed for his pallet, turned up the straw-mattress, and found nothing.

"They've been stolen," he cried.

"What?" asked Gallus. "I thought you only kept fleas there."

"Your jewels," panted Leonidas.

The statement astounded Gallus. It suggested vistas of untold wealth; he felt that he was going mad, and thus grew assured that Leonidas was mad; and then he remembered.

"Don't say you've lost those things I won." He paused. "But I suppose they were only paste—brass gilt and stuck with coloured glass."

Leonidas was wretchedly looking under everything in the room; the mats were overturned; and the air was filled

Gallus lost interest, his head filled with gnats of heat. "O leave the jewels and get me my wine."

But Leonidas flatly disobeyed. Then he stopped in mid-act of turning over his pallet again, beamed happily, and struck his brow.

"I put them in your shoes."

But they weren't in the shoes. Leonidas drooped and gave up the hunt, utterly blighted. Nothing that Gallus could say roused him; for the jewels represented incredible wealth to him, and he expected Gallus now to buy a large house with a proper kitchen. Gallus drank the mixed wine, and then, fumbling about under the bed, knocked over the matella. There was a rattle and out of the pot fell the lost jewels. Leonidas pounced on them with a sob and presented them to Gallus as if he had meritoriously recovered them after great tribulation.

Gallus weighed the necklace, pendant, and pearl in his hand, thinking how they would look on Cytheris. Then an idea came to him, lifting his scalp with pleasant titillation. He held up the necklet.

"Do you think that would buy a slave-girl?"

"Dozens of them," replied Leonidas, readily. "Thousands. Why, you could get a free woman to eat out of your hand for it."

"I meant—buy her for good," explained Gallus. But the mind of Leonidas could not reach abstract calculations. Shaking his head disappointedly and muttering "Thousands," he retreated to the stove and burned his finger.

Gallus dressed quickly, feeling better now that he had an object in view. He must act quickly; perhaps it would be already too late. "Come along," he said to Leonidas. He didn't want to look altogether poverty-stricken; only one slave was bad enough, but to have none would be to ask for insults.

ALL that Antonius could see was that Fulvia had somehow become kinder. Not that she slackened in her pressure; but there wasn't such a tormented look in her eyes; she didn't frighten him so much. He was pleased, and more airy; wondered even if he couldn't pick up communication

with Cleopatra again. But only when very drunk did he indulge in such optimistic fantasies. He knew that he'd never dare it, and worse, Cleopatra might have something to say about the way he'd treated Marius. She'd think he had betrayed her, whereas he would have executed Marius as fomentor of riots in any event. He wanted a quiet life; the world was full of good fellows, if one didn't go looking for trouble.

Lucius had made an early exit. As soon as he returned, Fulvia drew him aside into the viridarium, where the crocus were yellowing. Sitting on the edge of the fish-pond wall, she asked him eagerly:

"Is she dead?"

"No. But neither are the men caught. They were surprised."

It had not worried him that the men might be caught. He had promised to have them rescued from jail if they kept their mouths shut; and in hopes of his keeping his word they would have said nothing, waiting at least for the public examination. But he would have had them strangled in jail before they appeared in court.

"What are you always talking about?" called Gaius, appearing through the pillars at the further end.

Marcus had followed him out. "Leave them alone." He took Gaius by the shoulder. "I've abdicated the consulship in their favour. I want some peace for a change." He looked defiantly at Fulvia. "The world's a fine place, and filled with good fellows."

She stared at him and then looked sideways into the green translucence of the water; her thoughts sank into that other world, silent, swaying, drowned, alive with dark presences. In that under-water world of cruel darting shapes and greedy spawn, who talked of good fellows? So Cleopatra lived, and Marcus uttered his drunken lies, and she had only Lucius, for whom she did not care.

Gaius spoke in a low voice, so that the pair by the pond should not hear. "Why did you marry Fulvia if it's peace you want? Think of it, Marcus, you and I could be out girl-chasing at this very moment."

Antoni^{us} tried to hide his chagrin by passing his hand over

his face and yawning. "What, the consul of Rome? I'm about sole consul too. A position of almost unprecedented glory. Take your girls off before I jump on them."

"If I were you," said Gaius, with sudden and unusual seriousness, "I'd divorce Fulvia. But don't answer me. I know you won't." He laughed and resumed his sneer. "By the Twins, I think she sat on a hedgehog in early youth and never succeeded in getting more than half the quills out."

THE villa on the Tiber Road was in confusion. Mule-trains filled the garden, trampling carelessly on the lawns and flower-beds. Along the road there were baggage-vehicles, and in the drive stood some carts and covered waggons for transporting slaves. Gallus learned that Cleopatra had left early that morning in a fast carriage with a few attendants, going south; beyond that no details were forthcoming. But after a few tips he obtained an audience with Ammonios, master of the ceremonies of departure.

Ammonios was in the midst of a crowd of demoralised slaves, shouting orders. The slaves were tripping over furniture and half-folded bales of cloth; and Ammonios, from the papers in his hand, was sorting out what belonged to Cleopatra. The move had come so suddenly; and what angered him most was that on the spur of the moment he had to decide what objects it would be safe to purloin. Cæsar was dead, and his secretaries had ran away; no one was likely to know exactly what furniture had been provided; the ground would go to the people according to Cæsar's will. Ammonios was in a fret, drifting between a few parsimonious thefts and a conviction that he could reasonably take almost everything of value.

"What do you want?" he asked suspiciously, fairly polite because he feared that Gallus might represent Balbus or another of Cæsar's agents.

"It's a personal matter," replied Gallus, not quite sure how to proceed. "Have you the power to dispose of one of the Queen's servants, if you so wished?"

"Perhaps and perhaps not," said Ammonios, searching for a catch in the proposition, "It would depend on which

servant, and the purpose of the purchase, and the price offered. Also, of course, the servant would have to be one not indispensable to her Majesty—not that any are strictly indispensable, for that would be to make her Divine Presence dependent on a menial. So let me hear what you offer—and of course who the servant is.”

“I want to buy one of the kitchen-maids,” blurted Gallus, feeling a fool. “Not for myself. I’ve never seen the girl. It’s a present for a friend.”

“Who, doubtless, has also never inspected Queen Cleopatra’s scullery,” replied Ammonios, without a smile. He was inclined to have the youth thrown out; but these were touchy days and the youth was obviously a Roman citizen. So he curbed his impatience, stroked his beard, and went on: “What do you offer for this unknown wench?”

Gallus looked round, hoping that no one else was watching, and, to the despair of Leonidas, produced the gold necklace and pendant. “I’ll give you this in exchange.”

Ammonios took the necklace in astonishment. Who was the scullery-girl that allured so richly? If it had been one of the toilet-girls who would be a valuable asset in a beauty-parlour! His trained eye told him that the trinket was of great value. Learning the girl’s name, he issued his orders; and in a few moments Karni stood before them, bowing with a smile of ingratiating consequence, for she supposed that some further benefits were to follow on her last night’s exploit. Ammonios considered her attentively and could see no difference from any other scullery-maid. The youth was crazed. Well, so were all lovers, as was obvious; Ammonios himself, never having been in love, was content to register the fact objectively. Still the necklace was good, and the gems were gems, not perishable flesh and blood; and Karni could easily be marked down as dying on the road of dysentery. There were always some slaves who died when a household moved about. The necklace would become the property of Ammonios. He quickly dropped it into his sleeve, wishing to call no more attention to it.

“You can have her,” he said. “But I’m too hurried to go through the formalities of sale. We leave this afternoon. If you’ll take the risk of an informal sale, she’s yours.”

"I'll take the risk," said Gallus, shrinking under the candid gaze of Karni and wanting to get away.

"Then remove her as quickly as the nature of the beast will allow," replied Ammonios, and turned to continue with his checking of the list and his internal debate as to what articles could be stolen with impunity. The gold necklace weighed in his sleeve: a good piece of business.

"Will you pack what clothes you have?" said Gallus, clumsily, wondering what Karni was thinking.

"Certainly I will," she answered, giving him a look which rather worried him. "I won't be a few moments. Wait for me here."

Leonidas regarded his master with eyes of questioning sorrow and jealousy. How were three of them going to live in one room? This was going too far. It wasn't that Leonidas objected to Gallus having Karni or any other girl as a sleeping-partner; he objected to the way she was sure to boss him about and spoil the cooking. Karni looked the worst kind of self-assertive girl.

Gallus noticed the look of worry, misinterpreted it, and snapped at him. "I'm not buying her for myself, you loon. She's for Amos."

The news lightened the spirits of Leonidas considerably, though he was still annoyed at the necklace (the price of a house with a kitchen) being sacrificed for a worthless Jew; but before he had time to fabricate further thoughts, Karni returned bowed down beneath a small wooden case, two bundles, and a leathern bag; and to his unspeakable rage he was instructed by Gallus to carry the whole lot. Gallus and Karni walked on ahead.

"I saw the gold and jewels you gave for me," said Karni, smoothing down her dress over her breasts with a self-possessed air. "You could have got two or three of us for that. I mean, you could have got two or three of the others to wait on me." She added, with a shy bridling glance: "Where did you see me? I saw you outside the Macellum, didn't I? You winked at me."

"No, no," protested Gallus, gulping. "I'm not buying you for myself. It's for Amos."

"O," she said; and as he didn't like to look at her

wasn't sure if she was overcome with joy or surprise or disappointment.

Nothing more was said till they reached Figtree Yard and the perspiring Leonidas had thrown the baggage on to the floor with unnecessary violence, making three trips up the stairs to emphasise the weight he'd carried: a rebuke lost on the others. Karni was too busy at making herself at home on the bed, and Gallus at settling down on the stool—he had never noticed before how impossible it was to sit squarely on the creaking thing. Leonidas now had nothing left to sit on except the window-sill, which was high and narrow; the stove, which was very grimy; or the floor, which was undignified. He stood in a corner with folded arms, glowering.

Gallus was undecided what next to do: to send for Amos or to go to the Aventine and beard Ezra. In his wavering the only immediate step he could devise was to send Leonidas out for some cakes, for he had an unformulated idea that Karni must be famished. But as soon as he'd sent Leonidas out, he realised that the last thing he wanted was to be left alone with Karni. The poor girl might think he'd sent Leonidas away for some base design.

As soon as the last of Leonidas was heard thudding down the stairs, Karni rose from the bed, walked across the room, sat on the knees of Gallus, and kissed him. Gallus in his perplexity could think of nothing except that the stool-legs seemed to be bending and giving way; the girl was heavier than she looked; she was a nice, warm, pliable, excellent, attractive, almost wonderful girl, but she wasn't Cytheris and she was the girl of Amos.

"I think you're a perfect friend," he heard her saying, "and I do wish you'd tell me where you saw me. But before we go and see Amos, isn't there something you'd like me to do for you? You got rid of that brute of a man of yours so sweetly, . . ."

Gallus drew away and gently lifted her to her feet. "The stool's breaking," he said, apologetically. Then, in an attempt to ignore the situation, he patted her in a brotherly fashion. "You're a good girl. It won't be long now."

She pouted coyly: "Don't you like me?"

"Of course I do. But don't you see I'm the friend of Amos?"

"I know. That's why I wanted . . . It wouldn't hurt him, would it?"

"But I'm going to arrange for you to marry him."

"Yes, I knew you would, and I'm so thankful. But he hasn't married me yet. Of course it would be different if we were married. But I wanted us all to be good friends together."

Gallus gave up trying to explain, and was saved from his misery by the sound of Leonidas falling up the stairs in his haste to return. Karni returned to the bed, and pouted in silence. She had only wanted to do the decent thing and repay the debt of her future husband in the simplest and most inexpensive way possible; but her new owner didn't seem to understand. She hated him now. She was alone in the world, taken from the only surroundings she knew. He made her feel insecure, lost—as if shopkeepers all kept refusing a gold coin which she knew quite well wasn't counterfeit. The whole basis of social exchange was destroyed. She wanted to cry.

Indeed, as soon as she began to eat one of the hot cakes, she burst out crying; and Gallus, who had been brooding over the worthlessness of all womanhood and the utter lack of all honour on the benighted earth, rushed in anguish to her assistance. She hung weeping in his arms, and then allowed herself to be fed with pieces of cake, laughing through her tears. It was quite a new sensation, and she couldn't understand the man in the least. But she was feeling happier, safer. She rubbed her head against his cheek and smiled. He seemed to like her even if he wouldn't take the only thing she had to offer. Quite inexplicable; but there was no denying the facts.

Gallus was heavy-hearted. As she leaned against him, he found her entirely charming and wanted to ask her to run away with him—somewhere far away from Rome where they could forget Amos and Cytheris and the mad world of strife and ambition, where creatures lived only to hurt one another. But the impulse passed, leaving him with a

sensation of pleasant weakness—very much the sensation that Karni was feeling.

He sought to rebuild his world of good intentions. She was a dear girl; she hadn't meant what she said—or rather, he'd misunderstood her to say more than she meant; she was an innocent child. And he could never forget Cytheris. What was the use of spoiling the life of Amos and Karni in a deluded effort?

Leonidas watched the pair seated on the bed and revolved malign sarcasms in his brain. Wasn't the girl big enough to feed herself? He was another person who found his world grown unreasonable; and it all began with Gallus asking for a woman and then rejecting the perfectly sound daughter of the auctioneer's assistant on the floor below.

"You're the kindest man I ever met," said Karni, still obscurely troubled at not having been permitted to make a due recompense; and as she thought of his kindness, she burst, to his distress, once more into tears.

He decided to take her to Ezra. It was the quickest way to settle the matter and get a disturbing charge off his hands. So they set out again, Leonidas carrying the leathern bag and grumbling to himself. Ezra showed no surprise when Gallus asked to speak alone with him, for he was used to being approached for loans; but he raised his brows when both Karni and Leonidas followed Gallus into the small office at the side. Gallus repented more than ever his rashness in interfering with other people's affairs.

"This girl," he said, awkwardly, "is your son's betrothed. Her name is Karni. She's a Jewess of course."

"My son is not betrothed," replied Ezra with the mild air of a man correcting a trifling error. "And where is the father of the girl who makes this unfounded claim?"

"I'm her kind of guardian," said Gallus, who had thought out this phrase during the walk, but it sounded far lammer than he had anticipated. "Amos asked me to look after her. She's a freedwoman of Queen Cleopatra's household. I saw to her full discharge from the steward of the court."

"My father was named Benjamin Ben Joseph," said Karni,

rapidly. "He was a reputable dealer in glassware and died when I was born. He was a very wise man, and was cut off before his time through a dispute over the Scriptures which ended in a fit; and he died in the Synagogue itself, which happens to few."

"How did you enter Queen Cleopatra's service?" asked Ezra, without interest.

"My mother sold me during a famine. It wasn't her fault."

"Of course not," said Ezra, as if completing the subject of Karni. "And now, master Gallus, will you please take away this virtuous and beautiful young maiden, and allow me to continue with my accounts?"

Gallus stood helpless; he had expected a slight argument, but not this calm dismissal. Leonidas was pleased at Karni's discomfiture, but feared she would become a permanent resident in the attic and ruin the stove. Stirring, he shook the leathern bag, and a chink of money was heard. Ezra turned and looked at him, then at the bag, then back at Karni.

"I don't come without a dowry," she said, and, taking the bag, poured out a moderate heap of silver coins. Ezra watched with respect, but the money was far too little under the circumstances; she was a freedwoman, with only her own word for her father's status. Karni saw his emotions, and drew out the heavy gold bracelet which she had gained last night. This she dropped on to the pile. Ezra bent down and looked carefully without touching. It was a very valuable bracelet indeed, the stones were genuine. Gallus, remembering that he still had the pearl-stud, took it out and dropped it into the ring of the bracelet. Leonidas could not forbear a snort; even to get rid of Karni the price was too high.

Ezra straightened his back and looked kindly at Karni. She was blessing Yahwe, Isis, Atargatis, and Hermes (for she was hardly orthodox in her cults) that Ammonios had been too distracted by the move to inquire into her slave-earnings and commissions. Although he kept a thorough spy-system in the household, it had become deranged overnight and he hadn't heard of Cleopatra's gift. A slave's

earnings were by law the master's property and could be claimed before manumission or sale, though usually a master allowed the slave at least enough to start him off as a freed-man. Ammonios, however, had no such scruples, and Karni was lucky.

Ezra looked at Karni and noted that she was a well-built girl, not likely to run into a decline and cause doctor's bills; also she seemed disposed to treat him with due esteem. He cleared his throat. The only other girl he had had in mind was the thin Judith, whose dowry would be less and who would be forever complaining; her father Jubal was a conceited person and had felt too assured about getting Amos as a son-in-law. Moreover, it would do Amos good to be married.

"You are strict in the observance of your religion?" he asked Karni.

She nodded emphatically. "O yes indeed I am. Not one of the prohibitions have I transgressed." She felt a little uneasy at the statement, but decided that Yahwe would take it in good part as meant to refer forwards, not backwards. Henceforth she'd be a perfect daughter of Judah.

Ezra put his hand on her head and blessed her. "May God make you as Rachel and Leah."

Amos had entered the fullery and been informed by a friendly workman that his father was closeted with Gallus and a strange woman, a Jewess by appearance. The workman smacked his lips and cast his eyes up to the beams of the roof in appreciation of the strange woman's exterior. Amos at once knew the worst, though his first emotion was wild jealousy against Gallus—how had he found and got away with Karni? Then even this emotion failed, and only panic was left. Amos ran to the outer door, ran back, trod on a pile of washed clothes, stood angrily meditating plans for flight, moved towards the inner house with a vague intention of raiding the pantry and starting a new life at the other end of the city, and then halted in stupefied dismay as he saw his father peering out of the office-door and beckoning.

He entered the room and, without looking at Karni, was aware of her presence. In fact he was aware of nothing else. She was like a pattern of flowers painted all over a wall; she enveloped him, a cloud of scented draperies. He sweated.

"I have blessed Karni," said his father, "and she is to be your wife. See that you make her a good husband."

Amos was more astounded than ever. He had expected objurgations and was almost hurt that he hadn't got them. The marriage was impossible. Firstly, he didn't want to marry anyone; secondly, Karni was a wicked woman; thirdly, he didn't want his wife to have been a slave, even if she'd run away or bought herself off; fourthly, he wouldn't like to marry someone who wasn't a virgin, and he wasn't even the first with Karni, he was sure; fifthly, she'd lost her religion; sixthly, he wanted to marry someone with a lot of money; seventhly, he had a private scheme of marrying the fat hair-specialist in the next street, who made a fortune out of abortions, and who would probably turn Jewess if suitably approached (though so far Amos had done no more than give her a push in a crowd); eighthly, he was jealous of Gallus; ninthly, in an indefinite repetition of the first reason, he didn't want to marry anyone, except someone twice as beautiful as Karni and very rich—the kind of woman who'd object to her husband working.

"I'm too young," he said, shrinking himself up to prove his words. "I don't know the trade properly."

"If you're married," replied Ezra, "you will stay more at home and have more time to give to learning the trade. Your mother will be pleased to have a daughter-in-law."

Karni wanted to take Amos by the scruff of the neck and speak strongly, but caution urged her to wait till she was better established. She felt somewhat strange yet in the world of freedom; hadn't the behaviour of Gallus shown how different things were?

"I won't marry her," said Amos, desperately. He yearned to tell all he knew about her, but didn't dare expose himself. He sought for safer reasons. "She's lived in a house of unrighteousness and been contaminated by food not according to the law, besides working on the sabbath."

"Once the whole seed of Israel was in Egyptian captivity," remarked Ezra. "He that touches pitch is defiled, but he that first spits on his finger can touch molten wax unburned. She is a civil girl, and you will marry her as soon as it can be conveniently arranged." Now that Amos objected, he was entirely decided on the match; his only fear had been that he might seem to encourage Amos in going his own way.

Karni, unable to express her emotions more effectively in Ezra's presence, began to cry; and Amos grew confused. "I didn't mean to hurt her," he said, lamely. "But I'm too young to marry."

Ezra, ignoring his son, took Karni by the arm. "Come, my dear," he said, and led her out, still weeping, through the nudging workmen, to meet her future mother-in-law, who was anxiously peeping round the farther door-posts and then withdrawing, like a piece of rather tattered door-curtain wavering in a breeze.

Amos turned on Gallus. "Why did you upset things?" he asked hoarsely.

"But I thought you didn't want to lose her."

"Of course I didn't want to lose her," said Amos, contemptuously, "but did that mean I wanted to marry her? Now I'll never be able to leave home for fear she's squeezing the hands of the workmen."

He sank despondently on to a stool, and Gallus, followed by a jubilant Leonidas, walked out of the office. It was all no use. Lovers couldn't be helped. Nobody could be helped; they all preferred their own way of being miserable to someone else's way of being happy. They were all damned because they didn't know what they wanted; and he was the most miserable of them all. He had been able to put aside the thought of Cytheris while succouring this pair of distressed lovers; but now the sense of loss overwhelmed him again. He longed for the touch of his lost Cytheris, for the softness of her hair against his face. O to be near her; to see the movements of her ankles or her hips or her wrists; to watch her spine and her thighs as she moved, and to know what curve of resistant growth it was that all trees and flowers sought and lacked. To be near her: that was all he wanted.

IN WINE was the only satisfactory escape from Fulvia. With fuddled pleasure Antonius noticed that she gave up discussing politics with him and preferred to talk apart with Lucius; and what they told him to do, he did. It was the easiest way out. The Senate were keen to reach their final spring-session. Brutus and Cassius had stopped at Lanuvium and sent round word to the loyal townships to recruit a militia; but a suitable rebuke from Antonius had stopped them, and now Brutus was saying how ready he was to go into exile if it would quiet the State. Cassius had his hands full with Tertulla, who, objecting strongly to travel, had had a bad miscarriage. The Senate had placed under the control of Antonius the army that Cæsar had gathered in Macedonia, for there were rumours of barbarian invasions there; and Lepidus was being commissioned to settle with the remnant of Civil-War rebels in the West.

Antonius drank. The world was dead. Action was needed. He harangued the populace and praised Cæsar. Lucius called on the aid of Cæsar's chief secretary, Faberius, a cool-headed business-like fellow; and the news crept round that posthumous decrees signed by Cæsar could be obtained, if a high enough price was quoted. The Sicilians were bargaining for the full citizenship; the agents of the Galatian king for the return of confiscated territory. Money was coming into the house on the Carinæ, a lot of money. The Senate grew afraid and tried to limit the power of Antonius to deal with Cæsar's papers; but it was too late.

Antonius drank and enjoyed himself, with one eye on Fulvia. Cleopatra had gone. Let her go. Wine was better. A man took it into his belly; which was more than he could do with a woman; and if he spewed afterwards, then women and wine had similar disadvantages. Lucius and Fulvia were the wise ones. Life was something to exploit. Wink at Faberius and post up another proclamation. Why shouldn't the Galatian king have some more land, even if he was a twisty anti-Cæsar? Cæsar was dead now, and the earth was for the living.

Finally, after the last session of the Senate, Antonius took a band of veterans and broke into the Temple of Ops, where the State-chest was kept. He enjoyed himself watching the

scared faces of the priests and officials, and having the money weighed out. Not a coin was left.

He slapped himself on the chest, and drank deep that night. A good bribe must go to Dolabella, who was coming round to sense. Money was needed; for money bought men, food, swords.

Men. That was the solution. More veterans must be brought to Rome. None of the talkers at the house on the Carinæ knew exactly what was to be done; but they were preparing for war. Lucius suggested that Antonius should make a tour of Campania, on pretext of seeing to the proper carrying out of the settlement at Casilinum, and come back to Rome with some thousands more of veterans.

A fine idea. Antonius clapped his hands and called for more drink. Action. He'd like a few weeks in the open. He'd be faithful of course to Fulvia; he swore to himself, afraid she would read his thoughts and claw his eyes out; but across his mind there drifted the picture of dancing-girls, fat, cheap ones, the kind that got beamingly drunk and had no memories. He too would forget and come back with a good conscience.

He put his arm round the back of young Quintus Cicero, who now frequented the house.

"Won't you come?"

"I don't want to go south. I might strike my blathering old uncle. I tell you there'll be no peace in the State till you put him away."

Quintus Cicero drank with an oath, feeling a full-fledged conspirator. Certainly he didn't want to go south, though he'd have liked to ride about with Antonius; but he also hoped to see more of young Clodia, the girl he'd rescued from a bawdy robbers' den: he'd now come almost to believe that part of the story himself. Clodia, however, had been very good since her escapade; her terrified nurse Bhebeo had seen to that.

THE people had not forgotten the martyr Marius, though they bore no grudge against Antonius for his death. The martyrdom was one of those things that merely happened; what mattered was that there was a martyr. The faith of

Marius was spreading, though the mob seemed quiet. But the unending stream of worshippers who came to pay their respects to the pillared altar in the Forum showed how the faith was taking root.

Cæsar would return to save the world. He had not been a mere patron who aided and then passed away. The seed of a new order was to be found in the meaning of his life and his death. That meaning would repeat itself, creating a new world. Cæsar would return.

But of the man who had called himself Marius in the effort to redeem a fabulous inheritance no one thought except a staring-eyed girl who hugged a lazy black cat, spending on its milk the money that she painfully earned or begged. She did not tell anyone lest they should steal away her cat, for she knew that Marius and Cæsar were now one and that their united spirits inhabited the cat who had such an unquenchable thirst for milk.

LONG LIVE CÆSAR

X

A CLAIMANT TO THE INHERITANCE

BUT now a new actor appeared, someone quite forgotten: Gaius Octavius, Cæsar's heir. A lad of eighteen years, of sickly health, he had been sent to the University of Apollonia; and nobody thought of him again after hearing his name read out in the will until news came that he had landed in South Italy. He visited Neapolis and Puteoli, met Cicero and Philippus his step-father, and, duly warned against the ridiculousness of taking up the legacy, came on to Rome. There his mother and sister added their tears to the warnings and begged him not to attempt a hopeless task. The slight lad kissed them both, for he loved them dearly, and sent a message to the Tribunes that he would like to address the people.

Lucius Antonius replied that he was ready to convene a meeting and introduce him. The meeting was called; and the slight lad with the bright blue eyes and somewhat dandified appearance announced that he would take up the legacy and honour all Cæsar's wishes, and that henceforth he would assume the name of Octavianus Cæsar. The people were pleased, and praised him among themselves.

At home the senatorial friends of the family were waiting with remarks of the utmost depressing gravity. Octavianus listened with polite and apologetic disregard of all they said.

SOMETIME in the third week of May Antonius returned to Rome, feeling himself on good terms with all the world. He now had a large bodyguard. and had sent litterfuls of weapons ahead. He feared nobody. He wanted a province for five years; the rest was in cloud-cuckoo-land; and he felt vaguely annoyed at the violent speeches Lucius had been making.

But Lucius and Fulvia had also come to decisions.

"Where's Dolabella?" asked Antonius.

"He's a fool," said Lucius, speaking loudly and not looking at his brother. "No sooner had you gone than he rushed out and overthrew Cæsar's pillar."

"Of course I heard. I cheered him for it. We've had enough of this superstitious stuff."

"Well, he's in hiding again." Lucius scowled. "The people didn't like it."

"What the hell do the people matter? I'll fix up my province now and be glad to leave Rome."

"Listen to Lucius," said Fulvia, sharply.

"You won't hold your province long," said Lucius in a dry voice, giving Fulvia a quick glance under his lashes, "unless we hold Rome. I'm going to bring forward a Land Bill and set up a Commission. We'll all be on it. I'll have the law repealed that forbids proposers to sit in the commission they propose."

"I've no objection to that," said Antonius, pondering. "Perhaps you're right."

"And young Octavianus will join us."

Antonius leaped to his feet, swearing foully. "Whom do you mean? That little womanish whipper-snapper who's taking Cæsar's name in vain? I won't have anything to do with him."

"You must," said Fulvia with her usual cold decisiveness.

"Listen to me now," said Antonius, planting himself squarely before her. "I know all the arguments you're going to let loose. I know you're going to talk about the value of his name with the soldiers, and so on. And I tell you not to waste your breath. My name will go with the soldiers as far as we need to be taken. I tell you flatly I'll have nothing to do with the knock-kneed little girl that's calling herself Cæsar." His voice rose to a shout. "I won't. Do you hear me?"

He strode out of the room. Fulvia and Lucius exchanged glances. Gaius, who had been lounging against a sideboard, chuckled.

"I knew he'd stand up for himself some day. You'd better take care, Fulvia."

He followed his brother out, juggling with three figs.

"What did he mean by that last remark?" asked Lucius, fingering his scar.

"Probably he suspects," said Fulvia, negligently. "But he won't say anything. I'll see what I can do with Marcus, but I've never seen him so obstinately set."

She felt disturbed, and put her arms about Lucius, running her lips up and down his cheek, his scarred cheek. He felt as if the blade was ripping it warmly open—exhilarated, for this was the first time she had touched him of her own accord.

OCTAVIANUS went ahead asserting his position as Cæsar's adopted son; but Antonius took no notice of his request for the passing of a curiate law to complete the adoption. At home Antonius jeered at the youth's concern about having Cæsar's gilded chair set up at the Games.

"Such trifling's all he's fit for. I'll gild his nose if he comes my way."

"He's shrewd," replied Lucius. "He knows what appeals to the people."

"So do I," said Antonius, scornfully. "A good corps of swordsmen, like the fellows I've collected, to prick them in the bottoms. And I've bought a gang of Arabs in the slave-market, first-rate archers."

Fulvia and Lucius gave up trying to persuade him about Octavianus. They saw that he was beyond the reach of reason on the subject. He was a fool, for the alliance with the bearer of Cæsar's name would strengthen their position greatly. They had not much more belief than he had that Octavianus mattered personally; but he could be used with the most splendid effect. Antonius tightened his jaw and began drinking as soon as the subject was broached, humming camp songs.

At last Octavianus demanded an interview. After being kept waiting for an hour in the ante-room, he was admitted to find Antonius mending a sword-strap. Antonius did not rise, look up, or bid him be seated; he went on playing with the sword-rings, until Octavianus spoke.

"Can the consul spare me a moment?"

"O yes, I think so," said Antonius, continuing his work.

but glancing up. "What's the complaint? Someone treated you disrespectfully? Tell them I won't have Cæsar's name affronted, no matter who bears it." He finished with the buckle, rested the sword between his knees, and regarded Octavianus with insulting good-nature. "When are you going back to school?"

"I have finished with my books," said Octavianus, who was deathly pale, but spoke quietly. "I am claiming my testamentary rights."

"Then don't," said Antonius, airily. "Go back to school, my lad. The sparrow that lodged in the eagle's nest thought he had a commodious home with a fine view, until a gale came along. Now I'm rather busy and fear I must ask you to call again. Sometime next year, perhaps."

"I wish to have the curiate law passed settling my adoption." Octavianus, clasping his hands together to prevent them trembling, stood his ground.

"Go away and think it all over," replied Antonius, rising and walking towards the door. "Think it all over for a long time."

Octavianus was forced to bow and withdraw.

"You're a fool," said Lucius, lifting the curtain at the end of the room. Antonius swung round on him.

"Mind your own business, eavesdropper," he said, his cheeks flaming. "The grandson of the Veliternan usurer shan't buy his way to popularity at my cost, I tell you. I'm ready to back all the fiddling plans that you and Fulvia work out, but I must bar a few things, and that pale-faced sweet-heart is one of them."

He banged on the door-post. "Bring me some wine!" Then he turned back into the room. "Bah! the mincing love-lad sticks in my gullet—as bad as trying to swallow a dry mullet on a morning-after. I'm thirsty. Where's that drink?"

Lucius shrugged his shoulders; and Antonius drank with the wine running down his chin.

HE wouldn't be stampeded. He wrote reassuringly to Brutus, and grew friendly with Dolabella, the hero of the conservatives since the wrecking of the altar.

"Brutus and his crowd are loons," said Antonius. "And so are Lucius and my wife with their pack of starveling agitators. You and I are the only sensible fellows in this god-forsaken world."

"You're the right colleague for me," replied Dolabella, stretching up on his toes and trying to convince himself that he was as tall as Antonius. "Strange I never thought of it before. Well, we've been united by the truest bond. Cytheris, I mean. It's a theory of mine. There'll never be peace on earth till there's community of women. By mixing our seed in the same vessel we really become one: all scrambled together like the good old egg of the Stoic god."

"I follow you," said Antonius, wondering if he'd ask Dolabella if he'd truly seduced Antonia. It would be another link, according to this theory; but perhaps the present amity had better not be stretched too far. Dolabella was a good lad.

GALLUS had given up hope. He walked up and down the street where Cytheris lived, after dark so that no peeping slave should recognise him. Best to love at a distance. He recited to himself lines from his latest elegies:

No kiss of mine shall feed her breasts with milk,
for she beyond my entering love is draped
in beauty glimmering with rays of silk.
Her loins the god of chastity has raped.
That's what she is for me, for me alone,
as down the street she walks with offering eyes,
and by the ruffian wind her skirt is blown
between her obvious and expensive thighs.

Perhaps the third line could be bettered. In charms impregnable with rays of silk. It didn't matter. Amos and Karni were married and seemed happy at last. Gallus had at least brought two lovers together, even if they hadn't been quite gratified at first; but himself he could not help.

THE first of June. The Senate met. Antonius was expecting to be denounced and went along with a flamboyantly defiant face, half-drunk. But nothing happened. Everyone was feebly respectful.

That night he drank and swore loudly. Fulvia and Lucius were right after all. Things must get a move on. Let Lucius call a concilium next day and propose before the people, without the usual interval of three market-days between promulgation and passage, a law giving Macedonia to Antonius and Syria to Dolabella for five years.

Confusion to the wealthy. Action, more action.

The meeting of the plebs was held. The law was passed. On the fifth Antonius proposed in the Senate that Brutus and Cassius as their provincial sphere should have control of the corn supply from Sicily. This was a clever trick. The hard chaffering work was almost a degradation; it was sure to entail further unpopularity with every small omission or failure of corn cargoes; it would divide them from their parties and from one another, and fritter away their energies. Yet it had an appearance of friendliness.

The Senate passed the proposal.

The conservatives, many of whom had failed to attend the session, were stunned. Cicero had been meditating withdrawal to Greece and had written to Dolabella asking for a free State-pass. Dolabella now astutely replied courteously and sent a five-years' pass, thus putting Cicero in the position of accepting the enactment of five-years' tenure for Antonius and Dolabella in their provinces.

Antonius, who was now entirely satisfied with the state of things, moved the formal passage into the law of the decree of 17th March, guaranteeing Cæsar's Acts and the continuation of the colonies. This was to please the veterans. At the same time, not to frighten the conservatives unduly, he moved that the decree abolishing the dictatorship also have comitial endorsement; he also diverted from Buthrotum the emigration officials who were on the point of setting out—a gesture of conciliation to Atticus and the capitalists. A quiet life was what he wanted, and a province for five years.

Then Lucius produced and passed his Land Bill.

Throughout these years of social struggle a Land Bill was always the method used by the radicals to get power into their hands, to redistribute property and ease distress among the poor, and to put fear into the bones of the landlord class. The passage of the bill of Lucius, putting great power into

the hands of a Committee of Seven, undid the work of reassurance on the part of Antonius, and sent a wave of disquiet through the propertied classes. To what would it lead?

GAIUS ANTONIUS was restive. He had seen clearly enough what Lucius and Fulvia were doing; and after some bitter jokes to himself, he had become angry. But there was nothing he could do; he waited, keen-eyed for every glance or touch between the adulterers.

Today they were all drinking. The house in the Carinæ was now filled with the new Cæsarian party gathered by Lucius, the men whom the conservatives looked on as reprobates, bankrupt politicians, communists, social pariahs—with a sprinkling of the soldier favourites of Antonius.

Young Quintus Cicero was holding forth. "Someone ought to murder that uncle of mine. He's the core of the opposition. Cæsar would never have been killed if Cicero hadn't kept the resistance of his group awake. I've seen it all from the inside. If you don't do for him in turn, he'll cause a lot of trouble yet, and you'll be sorry."

"Killing a man," said Mustela, a hard-faced soldier, "is like plucking an apple. You've got to do it at the right time, or it gives you a bellyache."

"I remember once acting in an *Ajax*," said Nucula, one of the Seven Commissioners. "And Ajax in his fit swung the sword so strongly that he let it go, and it sailed off into the air, hitting one of the audience in the throat. Would you call that ripe killing?"

"I was talking of killing on purpose," said Mustela, in contempt. "Anybody could kill a man by accident."

"Venus Callipyge!" moaned Cassius Barba, another soldier. "I'm sick of killing. I'm going to settle down on a farm, and run it entirely by women. Not a single ugly-faced male on the whole stretch of it. Think of it, lads. King of a farm with nothing but women for miles round."

"Not even a cockbird for the hens!" grinned Antonius. "Why, the girls would end by treading you in the vat instead of the grapes."

Gaius slipped away. He wanted to see what Lucius was doing. He knew what was up, but wanted to see it with his

own eyes. Turning the corner of the corridor, he bumped into someone—a girl. He grasped her arm and peered into her face. Young Clodia.

“Sssh, don’t go along there,” she said. “Mother’s busy.”

“Is that so?” replied Gaius, thinking how unlike she was to Fulvia in face and manner, and yet there was something the same, a kind of teasing insolence. He was seized with a wish to take revenge on Fulvia, to attack her in some way.

The room at the side was the room of Lucius. Putting his arm round Clodia’s shoulder, Gaius lifted the curtain; for he knew that Lucius wouldn’t be there. Lucius was busy.

QUINTUS CICERO had still been unable to have a word with Clodia. One day he had seen her playing ball beyond the peristyle with her nurse; but Antonius had been talking with him all the while, and he couldn’t do anything. He was sure she had winked at him, nevertheless, at the moment when Bhebeo fell back into a bush trying to catch the ball over her head.

Now, noting the others absorbed, he, like Gaius, slipped out, hoping that he would chance on Clodia. There was no one in the corridor, and he tiptoed along it, his heart jumping. He didn’t mind being caught as long as he wasn’t suspected of designs on the silver. Then, as he was about to turn back, he heard a laugh which he was sure was Clodia’s, though he had never heard her laugh. It came from a room on the right. Unable to resist, he put his head through the curtains and achieved his wish, at least to the extent of seeing Clodia.

But the rest of what he saw was less satisfactory. For Clodia was in someone else’s arms. And to make things doubly painful, she winked at Quintus. There was no doubt about it. It was a solemn, insolent wink.

This was too much. He stepped through the curtains and said with what he felt to be a reproachful dignity, “Look here, I won’t be winked at.”

“Who’s this?” said Gaius, twisting his head round. “You bad-mannered young brat. Go back where you came from—if your mother will take you this time.”

“Let me tell you that my mother’s the best mother on

earth," said Quintus, angrily. "I didn't come here to be insulted by you."

"Then why the hell did you come?"

The question was unanswerable. Clodia gave a loud peal of laughter, and at that moment steps were heard along the corridor.

"O they mustn't find you here," said Clodia; and wriggling out, she threw the bedclothes over Gaius. Then, suddenly, she caught Quintus round the neck and kissed him.

It was a pleasant kiss. At any other time it would have been very pleasant to Quintus; but under the circumstances he objected and struggled to get away. She held tighter. The steps halted and someone lifted the curtain.

"Say it was you," pleaded Clodia, whispering into the ear of Quintus, "and I'll love you always."

Quintus wanted to curse at her, but knew he would succumb. The next moment someone had torn him from Clodia's arms and swung him back against the wall, where he bumped his head: which further contributed to his dazedness and secured the success of Clodia's appeal.

"You shameful little beast," said Fulvia in a low, harsh voice.

Clodia confronted her with her arms on her hips. "If I knew as much about myself, mother, as I know about you, I'd sell my blushes for rouge."

Fulvia smacked her on the cheek and turned to Quintus. "And you, you young fool, what do you mean by this behaviour? Is it your idea of how to repay hospitality?" She spoke to Lucius. "Fetch Marcus."

He made a gesture of repugnance, and went. Nothing more was said. Clodia sat on the edge of the bed and tidied her hair. Quintus leaned against the wall. He didn't mind the reputation of being the girl's lover, but would have liked the fact as well—though he didn't want to quarrel with Antonius. But he couldn't deny the situation now, and his greatest fear was that Gaius would sneeze.

Antonius stood in the doorway with Lucius behind him. "What's this?"

Fulvia pointed to Clodia and then to Quintus. "Throw that young rip out of the house."

"O now——"

"I know you hate the girl," said Fulvia, venomously, "because she's mine by another man. But you've got to act as if you were her father, however wretchedly you do it. Throw the grinning fool out."

Quintus became abruptly conscious that he was smiling with mouth open. He scowled hard.

"You'd better go," said Antonius. Fulvia was within her rights.

"And tell him not to come back."

Antonius faced the lad and touched him kindly on the shoulder. "And I don't see how you can very well return. Come along."

This was beyond the calculation of Quintus. What was the use of earning a claim on Clodia if he was forbidden ever to see her again? He wanted to protest, but caught her sweetly smiling eyes, and lost his power to speak. He followed Antonius out.

Fulvia seized Clodia roughly and flung her towards the door.

Lucius was left in the room. Gaius threw the clothes aside and sat up, yawning. "I was so frightened the dust would tickle my nose."

Lucius considered him without surprise. "So it was you. Why did the lad take the blame?"

"Because a warm little mouth whispered into his big burning ear," said Gaius, rising and whistling. "Now we're quits, you and I."

"I don't understand you."

"I don't understand myself. So we're twice quits. Hold your tongue and I'll hold mine."

THE scheme was that Lucius and the other Commissioners should keep a grip on Italy after the new consuls took charge next year, while Antonius and Dolabella built up their resources in the eastern provinces. It was a sensible long-distance plan. But meanwhile money was tightening. The upper class, unable to raise further loans to repay interest charges, were practically bankrupt; the hope that they could regain Cæsar's confiscations and thus recoup their losses

had failed; and the small group of financiers who had cornered the money were not interested to let it circulate. Decimus Brutus, the great hope of the conservatives, was left so short of funds that he had to pay his troops in Cisalpine Gaul out of his own chests; and no contributions were forthcoming from his party.

Brutus and Cassius were drifting south, debating irresolutely what could be done. The inability of Brutus to attend the Apollinine Games that as city-prætor he should shortly be giving, had sapped the last of his morale. Outside Neapolis the young noble Domitius had a fleet of ships ready for a wholesale patrician emigration. Cicero was despairingly dictating philosophic treatises with one eye on a Greek text, and bothering Atticus to make his balance-sheet meet.

Cassius alone hadn't given up hope. Trebonius was in Asia, Cimber in Bithynia. The legions in Egypt were recruited from Pompeian veterans; in Syria and Spain there were embers of the late Civil War. If Decimus Brutus could maintain his position, the Republic would yet stand against the dictatorship of the mob.

At Rome Octavianus was mixing with the veterans and giving all his energy to making the Games of Victory a success. "Let the boy make his fuss about the golden chair," said Antonius, and announced that if Octavianus caused a breach of the peace he'd be prosecuted.

ON the last day of the Games, which had been uproariously celebrated as a protest in praise of Cæsar, there was seen a comet in the sky. Octavianus at once proclaimed that it was a portent from the Divine Cæsar, and placed in the Temple of Venus a statue of Cæsar, the head decorated with a comet of gold.

"Let the boy have his gold toys," said Antonius. "He's a good understudy of Herophilus, the veterinary surgeon. But I doubt if he'll make as worthy an end."

The people were deeply touched. Cæsar was coming back.

WOULD Cytheris be present? That was the only thought Gallus had had since Nicias invited him to dine again at Dolabella's. There was no Cytheris there; and when

Antonius arrived, Gallus was certain she wouldn't come. Dolabella wouldn't flaunt her in her old lover's face, surely. Gallus lay looking at the two men that he hated most in the world. Every witticism of Dolabella, every hearty laugh of Antonius, wrenched at his nerves. And then Cytheris did arrive. Dolabella couldn't lose the chance, and Antonius couldn't object, seeing that he had first sent her as his envoy.

Cytheris saw Gallus at once; and before she reclined, she took Dolabella aside. "I won't stay tonight." She was thinking of Gallus; she would at least spare him such a cruel blow.

"Worried about Antonius?"

"It wouldn't be tactful, even if you are good friends."

Dolabella pinched her arm and led her to a place on the same couch as himself. She turned her back so that she wouldn't have to face Gallus who lay opposite. She was sure that they could never be happy in contact. She needed a round of enjoyments, dinners, and applause; she needed different men. There was no use hiding from the fact; one man couldn't satisfy her. She had faced the truth about herself and felt relieved. If Gallus could only agree to take his place among the others, she would be pleased to have him as a lover; but he would never agree. So farewell, Gallus.

Antonius and Dolabella were conversing in low voices, and without straining she heard snatches of what they said. Antonius wanted the provinces of Gaul after all; Dolabella was to keep Syria. They would jointly introduce a law re-alloting the provinces. Decimus Brutus could have Further Gaul till the end of the year, then he was to go to Macedonia. "But before he gets Macedonia, I'll have the legions taken away—brought over here." "Don't forget I've got Trebonius next door to me in Asia. I'll have to do some quick work." "It won't be safe to leave Decimus in Cisalpine Gaul while the usurer's grand-daughter is seducing the populace and offering them other people's money. He swears he'll pay the 300 sesterces per head. I wish him luck."

Gallus kept calling loudly to have his glass refilled. Perhaps Cytheris would notice and pity him—not that he wanted her pity. Suddenly he realised someone was speaking to him. Nicias had said something and everyone was looking his way.

"You're a man of Bacchic silence," said Dolabella.

Nicias had said something about poetry. Gallus was drunk, quickly, sickly drunk. The blood tingled about his ears and he spoke thickly. He wanted to astonish, to put these people in their places.

"I'm a poet, yes. And an 'extraordinary good one." He had sufficient control of his mind to know that the boast was futile, misplaced, boorish, and badly expressed; but he exulted in having made it. "I'll write better'n anyone here. Give me a tablet. Challenge you all." He had had a perfect idea. He would write out the strongest of his abusive elegies and put the name Cytheris in, pretending that it was impromptu. That would show everyone.

He lifted himself up shakily on his hands, refusing to look at Cytheris.

"I'll take the challenge," said Dolabella, who like all the members of the cultured class wrote verses. "And our theme will be Cytheris." He said this without the slightest notion how appropriate it was, but merely because he wished to bring Cytheris more under the notice of Antonius and because he had composed a few days ago an epigram which he could use.

Gallus was aware that he had been speaking crudely, but in his drunkenness he had no idea how crudely. His drunkenness suffused the simple words with all the unspoken images of his boastful mood; and though he felt unpleasantly flurried, he thought his gesture had not been lacking in glorious abandon. He waited impatiently for the tablets.

The guests buzzed with pleased anticipation. Dolabella took his tablet, and after a decent show of meditating scribbled his inspired contribution to the game. The guests watched him admiringly; and no one looked attentively at Gallus, except Cytheris, or they would have seen his face pinched with effort and slowly achieving a greenish pallor, while sweat ran into his eyes. For his mind had gone entirely blank; he could neither remember a single verse he had ever written or compose new verses. His head merely rang with "Cytheris, Cytheris."

Dolabella waved his tablet. "Time's up. Shall I read first?" He looked at Gallus, and Gallus nodded with dazed

acquiescence, glad to postpone even for a few moments the awful confession that he had written nothing.

Dolabella read out his lines in a voice that had the faintest echo of a lisp :

The Bankrupted Lover and his Lady

Why buy such costly clothes when you defeat
the other girls the less you take to dress?

"Pitying them, with dresses I compete;
pitying you, I strive with nakedness.
Don't slay my pity then, or you will view
my body bare for them but clothed for you."

The company applauded, and Dolabella graciously threw the tablet into the lap of Cytheris as she lay with legs drawn up. Then everyone turned to Gallus. The sweat was blinding his eyes.

"I haven't written anything," he said, in anguish. "The wax is too slippery."

There was a burst of laughter, and the guests rolled about on the couches. Antonius clapped and then held his ribs. Gallus watched in a dull horror. He didn't quite know what was wrong with his remark, but its reception showed that it had ruined his life for ever. He was ridiculous, damned to the level of a buffoon; he'd never outlive the story; he'd leave Rome and go back to his home-town beyond the Alps, Forum Iulii, where the rents of the property he owned would keep him in comfort.

Cytheris saw his anguished face and couldn't bear it. She rose from her couch.

"When you've all done laughing," she said, "I'll recite you something. Some poems you've never heard before."

At once there was a hush. She stood in a reposeful attitude and spoke without elocutionary emphases and posturings, beginning in an almost inaudible tone. Then strength crept into her voice, and with it a resonant pleading, rising and falling in intonation, so powerful in its urgency that a whole life's plea was packed into the structure of emotion which she created out of the poem's veering mood. She broke into a passionate vituperation; she dropped back into an intimate whisper again; she rose to a joyous demand, so that it seemed the hopeful cry of the words was proudly conscious of its

sure sensibility, an exquisiteness which was its own reward, a gratification beyond attainment or loss.

Gallus listened, entranced with an ecstasy greater than he had thought vouchsafed to a mortal. For she was reciting his poems.

She ceased and stood there, without any show of emotion on her face, awaiting a comment.

"Magnificent!" cried Dolabella, who had a genuine taste for verse. "Who wrote it all? Why, it's really great."

Nicias looked at Gallus, for he alone knew who the author was, having remembered some lines of the elegy that Gallus had shown him. At last he saw virtue in the poem; the originality lay, not so much in the lines separately considered, as in the new shape made out of varying emotions combined.

"Who wrote it, Cytheris?" everyone inquired. Even Antonius was affected; he had always considered Cytheris the best actress of the day; but by all the Venuses there was something remarkable in her tonight. She reminded him of unattainable things—Cleopatra, the face of Cæsar . . .

Cytheris pointed to Gallus, who lay gasping, his hair drooping over his face.

"He wrote it all . . . to me." She moved across to his couch. "Come on home with me, dear."

Gallus rose, miraculously with dignity, and took her arm. They walked out.

"Well, I'm damned," said Dolabella. "After that I'll give up writing poetry and take to politics instead."

NEXT day the two consuls promulgated the law for the Change of Provincial Appointments, which was tantamount to a deposition of Decimus Brutus. Decimus meanwhile, to raise money, hearten his troops, and accustom them to obeying his commands, had marched off to quell and loot some unruly Alpine tribes.

The Senate had been summoned for August 1st, to finalise the arrangement about Brutus and Cassius; and Piso, Calpurnia's father, alone had the courage to oppose Antonius; but he found no support. The Senators were too afraid of the veterans; they were no longer upheld with the strength

which had been theirs on March 17th. Antonius replied with scorn.

The report of his speech reached Brutus and Cassius at Neapolis. Brutus at once insisted on drawing up yet another manifesto; and when Cassius wanted to alter a few words, he swore that he'd go into exile if a word of his opinions was tampered with. The manifesto appeared, drawn up in firmly laconic phrases, announcing that "threats had no influence on free men," and bidding Antonius take note, "not how long Cæsar lived, but how short a time he reigned."

A man who tried to post the manifesto up at Rome was trampled by the mob.

Antonius announced that many rights must now be restored to the people: the right of appeal from a capital sentence, for example. Also the jury system must be reformed; military officers and centurions must be made eligible. This proposal was the worst blow yet made at the upper-class control of the courts, and was received with horror by the conservatives.

Money was unobtainable, and distress was growing.

OCTAVIANUS reclined on a couch, and watched his mother and sister, who sat sewing.

"Dearest," said his mother, Atia, anxiously, but preserving her cool aristocratic tones, "why must you be so reckless?"

"I'm not reckless," he answered gently. "Who could be more careful than I am?"

"Why don't you go back to the University?"

"I must fulfil the obligations laid on me."

"You know it isn't necessary in law—and the adoption was only by codicil. You could easily repudiate."

"Don't let us quarrel," said Octavianus, and there was a silence. He closed his eyes, and then looked up to see Octavia leaning over him, her hand resting on his brow. How calm, how sculptural her clear face, yet how loving her eyes with their long lashes.

"You know you can't stand the strain," she said, in her soft tones. Her fingers encircled his wrist and lifted up his hand. "Your pulse is too fast by far."

He removed his hand, took hers, and raised it to his lips. "You're the sweetest sister, but you don't understand."

But he himself didn't understand. Surely it was useless to fight when he didn't even know what he was fighting to gain? The people liked him because he had promised them the gardens and the largess. But he had no power, none whatever. The conservatives couldn't possibly want Cæsar's heir; and Antonius, his natural ally, refused to associate with him. The Cæsarian party was disrupted, and even its remnant was not his.

What use then to continue claiming his dangerous inheritance? The people shouted round him in the streets, but the veterans were naturally bound to their fellow-veteran Antonius. Yet there was something in the response of the people that was real. That, and an unknown voice of his own heart, kept him to the task. The only supporters that he had were men whom he wholly distrusted, as he knew they distrusted him. The extreme conservatives, knowing of his breach with Antonius, were hoping to use him against the threat of revolution expressed by the Land Bill, against the last of the Cæsarians. That would be a bad joke, if it didn't show how perilously placed he was.

But, worse still, he knew himself to be a physical coward. He was liable to faint or have fits at the sight of blood; he couldn't bear it; the very thought made him want to vomit. He trembled with disgust and fear as he contemplated entering the political arena, disowned by all sides, trusting only to a name—a name not even his by birth. Cæsar.

But he couldn't go back; and he had one good friend, Agrippa, who had come from Apollonia with him. Neither of the youths had influence or backing; but Agrippa was personally brave. Perhaps it was because he, Octavianus, didn't like to fall below his friend's standard that he was going ahead with things. Perhaps it was that obstinate need in himself which he couldn't grasp. Without policy, without hope, without courage, without power, he meant to challenge this world of interlocked forces which ignored him.

A SERVANT stumbled into the room, with face blanched. They were coming. Who was coming? He didn't know; but there was a crowd coming down the street, men with

swords, soldiers, men shouting. The noise already penetrated to the inner room.

"Bar and bolt all the doors," said Octavianus. This was the end. Antonius had suborned agitators to bring the mob along and murder him. It was a very unsatisfying end, but that couldn't be helped.

He kissed his mother and sister, who with the meek pride of their blood showed no signs of the agitation they felt, their minds busy with plans for his protection. Then he went out of the room. He climbed the roof-stairs and came out on the roof, sheltering behind some flower-urns. He saw the sunlight on a petal, and the sweetness of life flooded him. A thousand years of meditation could not plumb the intense radiation of one pulse of sweet sensibility, its meaning of beauty. He wanted to live.

The crowd had filled the street, noisily shoving. He tried to intuit their purpose; but all mobs were senseless, repellent—the antithesis of that individual moment of realising the bodily sweetness of time. This mob might be friendly or wild with lust for revenge; he couldn't tell. And yet he loved the people. Then he heard the street grow ominously silent. Someone spoke, and there was a cheer.

Surely the mob was friendly. Fixing upon his quivering nerves a fatalistic acceptance, a memory of the faces of his mother and sister—so loving, so frightened, so gently calm—he walked to the rail of the flat roof and raised his arm. One of the mob saw him and shouted, pointing up. All eyes turned skywards; there was a tumultuous cheer.

Octavianus smiled. He was not to die yet.

"Send in your leaders," he called, and turned to go below.

Three soldiers were waiting for him in the hall. They told him how it pained the people to see their two champions, Antonius and Octavianus, quarrelling; it was absolutely necessary for a reconciliation to be made. Octavianus smiled and agreed. The soldiers were filled with joy. They seized his hand and kissed it, declaring that they were going off to report to Antonius what he said. Antonius too must agree.

As they were going out, Agrippa came shoving his way through the men that blocked the entrance. He ran to Octavianus, a strong youth with curling hair and small nose.

"I heard you were being killed," he cried, and jokingly shook his fist at the soldiers. There were tears of worry and relief in his eyes. The two friends embraced and kissed.

"I shan't die yet," said Octavianus.

The door shut behind the soldiers, and he began coughing violently. His chest felt as though it were stuck through with heated swords. But he didn't mind, as long as he didn't spit blood. He put his hand to his mouth and looked at the spittle. No, there was no blood, Apollo be thanked.

Agrippa was holding him tenderly in his arms. He laid him down on the couch. Octavia smoothed out the cushions and straightened her brother's head, while Atia hurried out to get a mixture of warm milk, honey, and wine.

"I'm perfectly all right," said Octavianus, smiling at his sister and his friend. Life was infinitely beautiful. He was loved, and asked no more. He held out his two hands, one to Octavia and one to Agrippa. "That will heal me. The feel of your dear blood warming into mine. I need nothing else. I shan't die."

No, he wouldn't die. He saw the future, and he wouldn't flinch, however he was tortured. He was Cæsar.

ANTONIUS could not refuse the appeal and demand of the soldiers. Visits were exchanged between him and Octavianus, and Octavianus promised support for the law of Provincial Appointments. But neither tried to hide his aversion from the other. The Law was passed, in a Forum guarded by armed soldiers.

AntoniUS was stirred by alternate desires for withdrawal and for a violent outlet of his emotions. He had no plans of his own, and let Lucius and Fulvia do his thinking for him. He was drinking heavily and growing brutalised. Rome was a death-trap, and he wanted to get out of it; Cæsar had died there, slain by his friends, deserted by AntoniUS; Cæsar had been the one to control men and events. By Hercules, his stature was more apparent daily now in a world that visibly fell apart through lack of him. AntoniUS found that the sense of rivalry with Octavianus, Cæsar's heir, was deadening more and more his previous contempt for the mob's deification of Cæsar. He could play up to such fustian

as well as Octavianus; and as soon as he begun to play up to it, he felt drawn into the current of something enormously powerful, a dark rage and exultation that merged with the persecution-fears and releases thickened by his drunkenness.

He spent as much time as he could with his soldiers, drinking and horseplaying with them; and their faith and resentment overlaid his mind. By God, he'd make the world safe and easy for these fellows, and he'd pull down out of their smug riches all the nobles who'd betrayed Cæsar. By God, he'd tear up the roots of things. These simple fellows had the clue; they wanted only women, food, wine, and a worthy flag to follow. They would have their wish. The fermenting emotion of the populace crept into his blood, and he was glad to surrender to it.

Fulvia was taking money out of his chests to buy up the fine estates that were coming into the depressed market. Let her have the money. More would be found. The sword would tickle the moneylenders off their dungheaps. Distress was increasing among the mercantile and business classes. Antonius roared with laughter, and ordered the four best legions quartered in Macedonia to take ship for Italy.

This was a man's game. Let the soft-cheeked boy squat on his gilded chair and cry for mother's milk.

XI

CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS

CICERO was well started off for Greece; but, blown back to Italy by contrary winds, he heard how Brutus had written begging all patriots to attend the Senate. Some visitors hinted that his duty lay at Rome. Tired and old as he felt, he could not resist the call. When he heard how Piso had protested, he believed that there was still spirit left among the senators. He set off for Rome, and arrived on the last day of August. Next day there was to be a session, and Antonius had announced that he would propose "on every occasion of Thanksgiving a special day should be appropriated for offerings to the Divine Cæsar." Also Brutus and Cassius were to be given Crete and Cyrene, unimportant districts, for provinces.

The proposal about the Divine Cæsar was a declaration against the whole basis of oligarchic rationalism on which the Roman tradition had come to rest. It was infinitely more revolutionary than even the fact of Cæsar's dictatorship had been. It signalled a new era, and for Antonius it meant an end of hiding and half-measures. He was no longer a careerist or a man of compromising good-will. He was the spokesman of the people and the soldiers, exalted into dark menace.

Cicero felt that things had developed inexplicably, and decided not to attend the Senate. To vote against the proposal would be to incite the veterans; to vote for it was impossible. But Antonius, who had been drinking all night in scared anticipation of a conflict with the master-orator of the Roman world, could not control his nerves. Though pleased at Cicero's absence, he could not forbear letting off his tense emotions in vituperation. All the abuse suggested by young Quintus flooded back into his mind, and he

fulminated against the absentee as the real and malignant cause of Cæsar's death and all the State's disasters. He even threatened to send men to pull down Cicero's house over his ears as Clodius had done after exiling Cicero fourteen years before. Aye, he felt himself possessed with the passion of all the rebels of the last generation—Catilina the anarchist, who had died in an effort to break the financial system; Clodius with his frantic oratory, a man whose personal resentments had deepened into a sense of universal outrage, even of savage pity for the oppressed and the enslaved.

All their anger was locked in his blood, sanctified and given furious purpose by the image of the Divine Cæsar, the betrayed saviour.

Next morning he departed for his villa at Tibur, suffering the revulsion of his sick stomach; and Cicero appeared at the session under Dolabella's presidency. He sought to defend himself and to soothe Antonius with as much vigour and suavity as his hurt dignity would allow.

Then there was a further lull while Antonius drank and debated at Tibur. On the 19th Antonius reappeared in the Senate and blackened Cicero with all the abuse that he could dredge up out of his agitated mind and heart.

Decimus Brutus had replied refusing to surrender Cisalpine Gaul.

Antonius placed a pedestal to Cæsar's statue on the Rostra inscribed *To the All Deserving Father*. The altar was raised anew.

By God, he'd show the traitors.

Let the ringleted boy twitter his best. Cæsar's son was not the person named in a will but the man who could match his strength with a mad world.

GAIUS spent his time watching Lucius. He took pleasure in appearing suddenly behind him in corridors or doorways, speaking sharply into his ear, dogging him through the house, sometimes even waking him up in the middle of the night to make sure he was abed. "I thought you might have bought a spell to change yourself into a flea, so that you could suck a woman's blood—guess whose? But beware, if

she catches you between two finger-nails, she'll squeeze the guts out of you."

Lucius and Fulvia were growing more careless, and Gaius surprised them once in a side-room. He darted across and held Lucius from rising, snatched up Fulvia's hair and rubbed it over her face, then darted out of the room again. Lucius caught him later and told him that he'd have to stop his games.

"You stop yours first."

"Don't interfere. You can't understand. I love her."

"Tell Marcus then. He'd be only too glad to divorce her."

"If you tell him I'll kill you, Gaius. I won't have it."

"Very well then. You take her out of the way while I make a call on young Clodia."

Against his will Lucius was bullied into helping Gaius. Gaius browbeat Bhebeo, who, feeling herself a lost creature whatever happened, gave up hope and sat in a corner with her apron thrown over her head while Gaius laughed and played with Clodia.

Lucius was now the wretched one. He knew that Fulvia would never forgive him if she found out. Once he mentioned Quintus Cicero to her.

"I won't have him in the house," she said, curtly, "though he'd done nothing when we caught him. Do you think I didn't look at him closely? We were in time. Otherwise he wouldn't have got off so easily."

Land was her only interest nowadays. She wanted to buy and buy. Land, earth, that was something solid, a compensation. She wanted to buy Rome, Italy, the world. Earth, black and red soil breeding and rich with growth, bearing trees and corn, mother-earth, was the only possession. She kept the title deeds in an iron-bound box under the bed.

In his fear Lucius grew more heedless. He was rude with Antonius, making no pretence to act as an adviser, but bluntly telling him what to do. Antonius, however, now needed no urging. Ever since he had stood up publicly for Cæsar's deity and attacked Cicero, he gloried in his revolutionary speeches. He boasted whenever possible that he was the fulfiller of the work that Catilina had begun. Cicero, who had destroyed Catilina, was at last to meet an incom-

parably greater enemy of the capitalists. The day was coming when the poor would speak, and their word would deafen the lordly.

"THE four legions will arrive at Brundisium soon. I'll go and chase Decimus Brutus out of Italy."

Fulvia uncrossed her legs and then crossed them again. She leant forwards.

"I agree with you now about destroying Octavianus. He's unmanageable either as ally or as enemy. He's got to go."

Lucius nodded. "Fulvia and I have talked it over. We agree with you that he's a nuisance and can't be fitted into things."

Antonius laughed heartily. "I thought you'd come round to sense if you knocked your heads together long enough."

Gaius spoke moodily, lost in one of his passing fits of shame. "How's it to be done? He's getting very popular. All his name and promises of course."

Antonius laughed again. "Action, my beloved brother. It's only at Rome he has the material to cause trouble."

Fulvia interposed. "Then you'll have to accuse him of something. It can't be done except legally."

"I've no objection to accusing him. I'll see to the verdict. What shall it be?"

"Breach of peace and attempted murder," said Lucius. "I'll produce the witnesses."

"Murder then it is. Go ahead."

Antonius felt no compunction. It wasn't merely himself acting; it was the power that moved out from the army, the host of avengers. He, Antonius, was an integral part of that power; Octavianus, whispering with the conservatives, was an excrescence. All the murderers of Cæsar also must die. He had sworn it. Life was magnificent again, for he had simplified it. Action was the test, and the voice of men gathering together.

He laughed to himself, startling the others. Even Fulvia looked at him for a long while, pressing her thighs together. Lucius, seated beside her, slowly thrust his hand up her sleeve as he was fond of doing; he trusted to the dim light not to be seen. But Gaius saw, and fretted with rage, cursing

the fool who would surely be seen by Marcus, and yet wishing that a slave would unnoticed light a lamp and force Marcus to see.

Marcus saw nothing. He saw a legion marching through the room as down a roadway, swinging in time, five abreast, men banded for a common purpose. Justice to the oppressed and death to the traitors. That was a man's work.

NEXT day he denounced Cæsar's murderers before a meeting of the people. He was happy, with none of his usual hesitations and incoherences in public speaking; for he was out in the open at last. Now let the boy speak with equal clearness, or make way. Antonius was the avenger, but Cæsar's heir was dilly-dallying, trying to bribe the populace with gifts and listening to conservative friends in the evening.

"Justice must be done!"

The tide of response from the people caught him up, swept him heavenwards on a perilous crest of exultation. Higher and higher. Nothing could withstand the shock. What did he care if the impact crushed him too? By God, he'd give the simple fellows of the world what they were asking for.

THAT afternoon Gallus was walking up the street on the Aventine where the fullery was situated. He was feeling fairly contented, for he was still the accepted lover of Cytheris, though there had been quarrels of a minor nature during the last weeks. But that would pass, he was sure; and today he had taken a fancy to see how the marriage of Amos was progressing. His own love and the love of Amos had grown entangled in his mind, and he felt that it would be a good omen for his affair if the married couple were happy in one another.

They were coming out of the fullery-entrance as he passed the baker's shop next door—off to the market to buy a carpet. Things were going profitably, said Karni. The mother of Amos had insisted on giving her as a wedding present a complete set of copper cooking-utensils, though the cooking was mostly done by Rachel. It was customary among her people, the mother-in-law explained—or rather, Ezra had explained for her; for she was a quiet woman who had astonished everyone by her insistence on the copper cooking-utensils. Rachel was unpleasant. For some reason she

disliked Karni and always walked out of the room backwards when she was present; she said she wasn't taking any chances of being stabbed in the back, whatever she meant by that. However it was to the good, for no one expected Karni to enter the kitchen now, and once Rachel had fallen backwards down the stairs when Karni wasn't even at home, and so, fortunately, couldn't be blamed for pushing her: which was a judgment on her for perverting the way of walking that God had given her. It wasn't as if she was a crab.

Amos listened with marital complacency, his face smilingly vacant and his tongue finding a tendency to hang out slightly. It was obvious that his admiration for Karni was boundless, and that he considered her responsible for Rachel's fall even if she had been out of the house at the time.

Gallus felt vaguely homesick. Would he never know domestic sanctities?

They had entered a side-street, when Karni started, caught both of the men by the arm (she was walking between them), and uttered a squeak.

"What is it?" asked Amos, with uxorious importunity. "Has something come loose?"

His tone implied infinite condescension in ignoring Gallus who didn't own a woman in whom things might or might not come loose. Karni pointed towards two men walking ahead.

"Look at that man's leg. Those are my teeth marks."

The eyes of Amos protruded with horror. What confession was he about to hear?

"The man I bit that came to kill the Queen," said Karni, irritably. "That's exactly where I bit him. It must be the same man."

"It looks to me like a dog's bite——" began Amos.

With a cry of indignation she darted forward to overtake the man.

"Stop her," called Amos, in amazed misery, shaking his hands. "She'll have us all killed. Stop her."

But before they could catch her up, she had thumped the man on the back. Both men turned, and Karni confronted them with flashing eyes.

"You're the man I bit in the leg," she said to the taller man, with accusing finger. "I'd know that bite anywhere."

The man, who showed the dully purple marks of a partially-healed bite on his calf under the fringe of his dirty tunic, looked at her ferociously.

"We don't want any women. We're married."

"I'm the one that bit you," said Karni, fearlessly. "And I'll bite you again if you don't look out."

Amos groaned for the lunatic courage of women. He and Gallus had now come up; and Barcha and Blattius, beginning to feel frightened, assumed a more threatening air.

"Is this your woman? Take her home and drown her with the cat's next litter of miaowling kittens, see! We haven't any time to waste supplying her with drinks. She's a cannibal, so she says."

"She's my wife," implored Amos. "She doesn't know what she's saying or doing."

Barcha, seeing that he was the weakest of the opponents, promptly hit him in the face. Karni at once clawed him fiercely. Blattius tried to pull her off. Gallus came to the rescue and tried to pull Blattius off. Amos closed his eyes, so as to have an excuse for doing nothing; it was the pain, he said afterwards. A crowd gathered, applauding and hooting, then stood silent as a man with an air of official importance stepped through.

"I'm a viator of the tribunes," he said, sternly. "What's this fuss about?"

The combatants fell apart. Karni, Amos, Barcha, and Blattius all began to talk at once; and Gallus edged away. As he did so, he saw a slip of paper which had apparently fallen from one of the scufflers. Having a professional interest in manuscript, he stooped without thinking, picked up the paper, and glanced at the first lines. At once he pushed the paper into his sleeve-fold and looked at the two men whom Karni had assaulted. They certainly seemed desperadoes; taken up with the viator, they had not noticed the action of Gallus.

Blattius whispered aside to the viator, pressed something into his hand, and grinned. The viator announced in a loud, hectoring voice, "Here now, young woman, you'll be seriously liable if you don't keep the peace. I order you to let these law-abiding citizens depart without further molestation."

Karni opened her mouth to protest, but Amos caught and held her with miserable appeal. "You mustn't." He placed his hand over her mouth. She bit it; but by this time Barcha and Blattius were moving rapidly off.

Noting a small street-boy, Gallus approached him. "Follow those two men, and find out where they live. I'll wait in the tavern opposite. I'll pay you well."

The boy, after a shrewd glance at Gallus, sped away; and Gallus, cautiously drawing the paper from his sleeve, read it through carefully.

"So I waited in the tavern three hours and was starting to give up hope, when the boy returned with the names and addresses. There they are, and there's the paper I picked up."

Gallus pointed to the paper in the hands of Octavianus, and Octavianus studied it again.

"It's no more than I expected. I heard this morning that Antonius had begun a rumour that I meant to assassinate him. I wondered what was coming."

He looked at the paper and read it out as if wishing to imprint it on his memory:

Learn by heart and destroy.

Bribed to kill M. A.

You met O. in small room on left of courtyard at back of his house, in evening after dusk two days ago, entering through wooden gate in the stone wall at the back. Afternoon of Oct. 2nd. He was at home that afternoon. So don't shift the date. In the room is a table and cupboard. Mention that to convey effect you were really there.

You were to organise scuffle at next Contio and stab consul when coming down from the Rostra. Reward 100,000 sesterces each.

Learn this and don't vary it when questioned.

Say conscience overcame you, and love of Divine Caesar whose champion M. A. is.

If asked how you first got in touch with O., say that a friend of yours—invent a name, but don't change it once you fix on it—came to you and said he'd been approached by Agrippa. Say you don't know where to find him, but believe he's gone off to brigands in Pomptine marshes.

Don't vary this story.

Destroy this as soon as you've learned all the details by heart.

"Thank you," he said, quietly. "I think my life is worth saving. We'll see anyway, my friend—if you will allow me that title."

"I'll deserve it," said Gallus. "I'll tell you the truth. I only brought that paper because I hate Antonius; but now that I've brought it, I'm glad for other reasons."

For the first time he realised the tumult of affairs about him as really happening. Till now they had seemed only the act of demented creatures shut out from his secret purposes of love and poetry; but looking on the strained, pale face of Octavianus, he felt something else. He saw the cry of mankind for a leader, for a master who would be sane and balanced; and he felt the pity of that cry, for its urgency would perpetually defeat itself. The sick hearts that longed for sanity could only be led by someone half mad like themselves; and he knew that the slight and graceful young man before him heard that cry night and day, and longed to answer it, and perhaps would bring some solace and ordering to the broken world, and perhaps would die in futile struggle. And somehow the love of Gallus for Cytheris, and all that he had found so devastatingly momentous, seemed very trivial, very small.

Octavianus folded the paper and unfolded it; then he took up the slip on which Gallus had written the address of Barcha and Blattius.

"What are you going to do?" asked Gallus, curiously. "If you don't mind me asking."

"I'm trying to learn a lesson from my enemy. He isn't squeamish. Yes, I think it's better these two rogues die than myself."

Gallus bowed and turned to go.

"Come back and see me again soon," said Octavianus. "I haven't many friends."

When Gallus had gone he sat for a long while looking at the paper. Then he called a slave and asked for Agrippa.

THERE was despair in the tenement apartment of Barcha. He and Blattius had spent the rest of the afternoon searching in vain for the lost paper; for the loss had been discovered as soon as they reached home. Now they were drinking

cheap Vatican, afraid to talk too loudly; for the walls were not thick. So there was little they could do but abuse Barcha's wife. They could shout at her and no one in the other rooms would notice anything unusual. They shouted. It was the only relief to their feelings they had.

Blattius had been sleeping in the apartment since the night of the unsuccessful attack on Cleopatra, and looked on the woman as almost his own property as much as Barcha's. He was as loud-mouthed in abuse. The woman moved from one of the small rooms to the other, at the shouted curses and commands, trying to obey both men quickly.

"Are you sure you haven't got it somewhere about your clothes?" asked Barcha for the hundredth time, reverting to the problem of the paper.

Blattius leaped to his feet. "Haven't I told you I've looked? Search me then!" He pulled off his tunic and shift, kicked off his sandals, and threw them all at Barcha in a bundle. "Have a look yourself."

"Your not at the Baths," said Barcha. "Put your clothes on in front of my wife."

"I won't," roared Blattius, who had been slowly working himself into a state of rage against Barcha for days; the man made it so obvious that he had a wife; Blattius hadn't been able to sleep properly since he lodged in the room.

He turned to the quailing woman. "Don't you think I'm a better figure of a man than that barrel of a husband of yours? You ought to put him in the frying-pan and melt some of that fat out."

"It was you lost the paper," said Barcha, "and now you're trying to steal my wife under my very eyes."

He snatched up a broom-handle, aimed a swipe at Blattius, and caught him across the crumpled ear. Blattius retorted by throwing back a heavy clay ornament, a rough statuette of the Prænestine Fortuna. It hit Barcha on the head and laid him out.

With a muffled scream the woman dropped beside her husband. "He's dead," she sobbed.

"Nonsense," said Blattius, drinking off his own filled wine-cup and then Barcha's. "Tickle his nose with a feather. Scratch his soles with a rusty nail. He's shamming."

But she continued to sob, and Blattius kneeled down at her side. He placed his hand over Barcha's heart and could feel no pulse.

"Wake up," he said, and shook the body. "Perhaps he's dead after all," he admitted, blankly. "Yes, by God, he is." He turned to the woman. "What'll we do with him?"

"You villain," she answered, and beat at his face. "My loving husband—you've killed him—you wolf——"

The wine was fuming in the head of Blattius, and the woman's blows awoke an interest in her. "I've got an idea. You're a widow now. I'll marry you myself. My old friend would have liked it. For his sake."

He embraced her, taking the precaution of clapping his hand over her mouth. "No, no," she sobbed through his fingers.

Absorbed in his own proceedings, Blattius did not hear the outer-door opened or footsteps creaking across the floor of the next room. The inner-door opened, and still he heard nothing. But when someone slapped him across the back with the flat of a sword, he was aroused from his engrossing occupation. Looking up, he saw three men with swords drawn, ugly-looking veterans.

"Is your name Barcha, or Blattius?" asked one of the men.

"My name's Blattius," said Blattius, indignant at being mistaken for Barcha. He was then about to remonstrate at the intrusion, when the man stabbed him carefully in the heart.

"The other fellow's dead already," said another of the men.

"Was he Barcha?" the third man asked the wild-eyed woman cowering in a corner, her dress hanging in tatters about her ankles as she sought frenziedly to put up her hair under a fallen fillet-band.

She nodded.

"Leave her," said the first man, wiping his sword on a hanging. "She's out of her head, and she answered when spoken to, and she wasn't included in orders."

The others signified their agreement with this reasoning, and the three trooped out.

The woman remained cowering in the corner, watching

the corpses out of the corner of her eye. Then she said, "Go away. I'm not married to you." She shrank back, her arm over her eyes; but nothing moved. Growing braver, she rose, tiptoed across to the side of Blattius, and touched him. Still nothing moved. She kicked him, and scuttled back to her corner. Still nothing moved. Boldly she approached again, and stood over him, kicking and hitting.

"Go away, won't you? O you're a bad man." Her voice had a hard, timbreless, childish tone, and she went on, almost cooly, "Go away before my husband sees you, or he'll kill you."

NEXT day the more respectable friends of Antonius received a message that he would like to consult them on a very serious matter. They assembled at his house and found him in a grave mood. He had, he informed them, discovered a plot of Octavianus against his life, and would produce full evidence.

Before he spoke further, Lucius entered with troubled face and took him aside. Antonius then finished his speech confusedly, saying that the evidence was irrefutable and that he would produce it on some future occasion. Then he sat down abruptly.

The gathering realised that he was trying to put on them the responsibility for a far-reaching decision. That was all very well; but he couldn't expect them to advise a prosecution when he had produced no evidence. One of the men suggested that it was hard to speak definitely without having heard the evidence.

Antonius agreed, and dismissed the gathering affably.

When the guests were gone, he turned on Lucius. "So your fine fellows are dead. Very opportunely."

"They were murdered, and a crackbrained woman found with them. I don't suppose she did it. Anyhow they're dead. Don't look at me like that. It wasn't my fault."

"So the darling boy goes free still," said Antonius, bitterly. "I'll tell you where I do blame you others. That's in getting rid of young Quintus Cicero. He was the kind that would sincerely swear to anything after being told it when drunk."

"Your filthy friends can do as they like," said Fulvia, who

had entered, "except meddle with my daughter. I've never forgotten—and neither have you—how you tried to seduce me when I was the wife of your friend Clodius. He acted decently anyway, and you never forgave him for what he said. It shows what you've always thought of me. But you shan't include my daughter in your thoughts."

"Of course, she's as chaste as a cut sparrow," said Antonius, retreating before Fulvia. "O don't come making tiger's eyes at me. It won't work." He turned to Lucius. "But this failure doesn't matter. I'll smash pretty-boy yet. I shan't go to the province before I've done it."

"I want some money," demanded Fulvia. "I want to buy a ranching estate in Appulia."

"Go and take the coins," snarled Antonius. "Don't you keep the Treasury under your bed nowadays? Take care you don't mistake it for the chamberpot. By Hercules, I can't stand this petty plotting and bibble-babble. I'll burn Rome down if something doesn't happen soon."

FIVE days later Antonius and Fulvia started from Rome to meet the legions that were due at Brundisium. That night there was a meeting of the friends of Octavianus, extreme conservatives, who believed he had truly been implicated in a plot to murder Antonius. Marcellus, who was to marry Octavia in a few weeks, continued his efforts to kindle Octavianus. He was an aristocrat of the bitter, unyielding type, charming in his manners; and Octavianus had no difficulty in seeing through his efforts, but still liked him. That was the distracting thing. Octavianus liked all these men; he sympathised both with the people's demand for strong and fatherly government, and with the conservative effort to hold intact the devotional spirit of the race in all its disciplined purity. Even Antonius he hated only in the moments when fear crept over his skin. He had no wish to make a bloody offering at the shrine of his dead grand-uncle, and could not believe that the ghost of Cæsar would wish it. Comfortable in his home-circle, he looked on the faces of his mother and his friends, and wondered why he could not drop his inheritance when it involved him in such a false position; and yet drop it he could not.

"You're the only person who can withstand the disruptive forces," said Marcellus, eagerly.

"I have nothing behind me."

"Every citizen of goodwill is on the side of the man who seeks to restore peace. The soldiers will follow your name."

There was much in what he said, but it rang false. Octavianus knew where the flaw lay. The conservatives couldn't abandon the Liberators; yet any man who relied on the soldiers for support must sooner or later repeal the amnesty. Still, perhaps Marcellus was right. Very careful management might carry them through. If a stable State was strongly restored, the blood-clamour of the populace would die down. If the soldiers were well-paid and well-settled, if the crowd got its largess, the subversive cries would cease. But once a leader came right out into action as things stood, there would be a terrific pull exerted on his effort to keep a balance; only extreme luck or skill could bear him on till the moment of reorganisation.

"You see the trick Antonius played. There's more to come. Either you fight or go under."

That was true.

The conversation drifted excitably on. Octavianus could not feel convinced when he knew these men were only seeking to use him to bolster up their class privileges. He had no hatred of that class; he loved the better side of its tradition; he wanted everyone to be satisfied; but his inheritance drew him on. He would have to fight Antonius.

"You know that as soon as Antonius musters his legions outside Rome, it's the end of you and the end of the State. Your destiny is bound up with the State's."

Octavianus looked up and caught the eyes of Agrippa. Friendship was strength.

"I shan't be caught," he said, quietly, terrified of his words, terrified of the course of action into which he would be compelled by his words.

"What are you going to do then?"

"I'll recruit the veterans. I'll win the legions away from Antonius."

He wanted to add: My name is Cæsar—but forbore to

do so in the face of these men who had hated Cæsar. They had advised him to the course. So be it. If it turned out to their own ruin in the end, on their own heads be it. He would do what he had said.

Marcellus smiled. It wasn't hard to influence this mild-mannered young student who had had the name of Cæsar thrust upon him and who was ready to take the onus of such a complex job as that of opposing Antonius. Marcellus felt himself a very clever politician.

OCTAVIANUS set off southwards with his servants and clients, loading all his money on mules. He was going to Capua to sell some estates for his mother, he said, and to make a start paying Cæsar's legacies. Since Antonius would not release Cæsar's funds, Octavianus would sell his own considerable property inherited from his father. But as soon as he reached Capua he sent out his agents to collect veterans.

In the second week of October the four legions from Macedonia arrived at Brundisium with a large body of Gallic and Thracian cavalry. Octavianus would need a lot of men to offset this acquisition of Antonius. But friends of his, to whom he had written in Macedonia, had already talked among the legions; and when Antonius, haranguing the troops on arrival, mentioned a donative of 400 sesterces for each man, there was an outburst of jeers, laughter, and howls. The men considered themselves withdrawn from an impending and lucrative Parthian War for mean Gallic quarters, and expected compensation.

To Antonius, however, in his strained mood the signs of mutinous spirit were read far more darkly than the facts warranted. Tales reached Rome that he had summoned the centurions black-listed for aiding the breaches of discipline, that he had had them executed in the courtyard of his house, and that Fulvia had pressed so close the blood spattered her dress and face. Dissatisfaction was increased among the legions by agents from Octavianus offering a donative of 2000 sesterces and talking of Cæsar's son.

Octavianus himself in Campania now had about 3000 men; but he was aghast at his action, which amounted to an act of war by a private citizen against the legally appointed

consul. Worse, he could find no reason in his heart for the action except fear of his own safety. He had no plan, no political theory. In desperation he wrote to Cicero, who had retired to Puteoli to compose a lengthy denunciation of Antonius for circulation among friends and to finish his treatise *On Duty*. Letter after letter he wrote, several in one day, imploring the aid of the old orator, the theorist of the perfect Roman State. What did it matter that Cicero had been Cæsar's foe? Octavianus was frightened and conscience-stricken. He must have a goal, an explanation, a justification.

Cassius had sailed away for the East. Antonius knew what that meant. The struggle was nearing. The conservatives were at last measuring their strength; they were bidding Decimus Brutus stand fast; and they were able to use the pestiferous Octavianus to cloud the issues among the veterans. The only hope of Antonius was to simplify the issue, to make himself the manifest champion and avenger of Cæsar. Nothing else could eliminate the boy.

He wrote to Dolabella, bidding him leave for Syria. Cassius must be cut off.

Then he himself set off on his march to Rome with one of the Macedonian legions and the Gallic *Lark*, sending the other legions up the coast-road to Cisalpine Gaul. He would convoke the Senate and have Octavianus named as the rebel that he now undoubtedly was.

Would she go? Cytheris looked again and again at the note and tried to find some fault with the wording, something to quarrel about. Dolabella had written: "I leave tomorrow for the East—perhaps to die, for it means war. Come and spend the night with me."

She wanted to go. Yes, face it honestly. She wanted to go, but didn't like deceiving Gallus. Tell him the truth then. And make him miserable, to escape her own qualms, perhaps ending everything. She didn't want to go as much as all that. But still she wanted to go. Dolabella was a dear, and she couldn't let him down.

Why hadn't she kept true to her knowledge? No one man could serve. Why couldn't she be truthful and tell Gallus

that simple fact? "I'm yours when you want me. But you mustn't ask where I go when I'm not at home."

He was the poet of the hour now. She had made him that with her recitations of his verse. He had the entry to all kinds of houses—places where she couldn't enter, except perhaps for a few moments during dinner, very distinctly a performer, herded away as soon as she'd done her turn. That was all wrong. If he wanted her so entirely, why didn't he marry her? Of course it would ruin his career; but he didn't talk of careers when he told her how he loved her. He talked only of wanting her. So he was a liar. He deceived her. Her career was to discover her beauty and intelligence in the mirroring embraces of the men that she liked. He wanted her to drop that, but wouldn't drop his own career. With masculine hypocrisy he took it for granted that his social ambition was something worthy, her personal need something beastly. Well, it wasn't. It was a thing of delight. She loved Gallus the best, and yet never did he take her with such tact and abandoned sweetness as Dolabella would take her this very night.

She had decided. She didn't want to marry Gallus. She'd refuse him if he asked. But he was a hypocrite, a deceiver, until he asked. Until he asked, she'd feel herself free to deceive him in return. He couldn't legally marry her as she wasn't a full citizen, but he could set up house with her and treat her socially as a wife. It would be marriage.

Blithely she stood before the silver mirror held by a girl of bronze. She clasped her hands behind her head and took a deep breath that raised her breasts and made her feel as if a lover was pressing against them. Gallus would never ask her to marry him. She was a free woman.

When Gallus called that evening, he found a note to say that she was meeting a friend and he wasn't to wait for her; she wasn't feeling well.

SENDING out Edicts as he came, Antonius approached Rome. It did not worry him that the Edicts were undignified, declaring the great-grandfather of Octavianus to have been a rope-maker, his grandfather a usurer, and his father an election-racketeer, and abusing Octavianus himself as

Cæsar's catamite, who owed his adoption to vice. The days of the boy were numbered. Antonius announced that the Senate must meet on the 24th to consider the situation.

But Octavianus had received news from his spies and set out first. He arrived at Rome on the 10th and stationed his 3000 veterans outside the walls near the Temple of Mars. He saw at once that he had gone too far. The senators were ready to congratulate him privately, but had no intention of daring Antonius and his superior forces. Even the 3000 veterans were wavering, unable to follow what was going on; it looked as if they'd be named as public enemies.

Antonius sent his two legions to Tibur and came on to Rome. The session had been postponed till the 28th, to give him time to encamp his men; he wanted also to confirm their attachment to him, for he had learned the agents of Octavianus were hard at work. When he had made sure of a firm basis, he returned to complete the crushing of the boy, whose 3000 men were rapidly deserting.

But though the legions at Tibur had been purged of discontent, the others, lacking the presence of Antonius and angry from the events of Brundisium, were easier material for the agents. No sooner had Antonius reached Rome than he heard that the Martian legion on its march northwards had rebelled and gone off to Alba, declaring for the Son of Cæsar. At once Antonius rode headlong to Alba, only to have the gates shut in his face. In a fury he hastened back to Rome, and there the news met him on the daybreak of the 28th that the 4th legion had followed the example of the Martian.

Octavianus was saved.

When the Senate met, Antonius merely announced that Lepidus had successfully pacified the West and thereby merited a Thanksgiving. Then he left the House.

Everything had happened so quickly that he left without calling for a vote on the unfilled provincial appointments of the next year. It would be madness to leave them empty, for the conservatives to seize. So, contrary to custom, he hurriedly called a second session for that evening; and the gaps in appointment were filled. Gaius Antonius got Macedonia, and Africa was given to Calvisius, a sound Cæsarman.

Antonius, returning home, collected those of his supporters who still remained at Rome, and marched them off to Tibur. Then he drank himself blind over the sudden collapse of all his schemes.

He awoke in a haze of exasperated depression. He felt that he had lost all grip, and wanted to end the struggle. Everything could be patched up yet; he wouldn't start a war out of mere pique. His hatred of Octavianus was wearing thin, picked to shreds by the riddling fears that infested his mind. He still had contempt for the lad, but his passion was gone. He felt sick and wanted peace.

A deputation of the weightier and more impartial senators awaited him. They argued gravely for a truce. There was no reason why all parties should not work together. It was clear that, if necessary, they would sacrifice Octavianus, who had the most anomalous position of all the leaders.

When the deputation went, Antonius sat with his head between his hands. Then he spoke:

"I'm coming to a composition with the Senate."

"You're doing no such thing," said Fulvia. "You're going to fight Decimus Brutus."

"I'm not."

"Fulvia's right," said Lucius. "You can't withdraw now."

"I can."

"Don't you want to destroy Octavianus?"

"I could destroy him quickest by joining up with the Senate and cutting off his support there. But that's not the reason. I'm sick of things. I'm sick of putrid ambitious scheming."

"You're going to fight," said Fulvia. "Everyone's pleasant to you now, because they're frightened. How do you think you'll last after the end of the year when you're consul no longer?"

"Fulvia's right," repeated Lucius. "You're not beaten because you've lost two legions."

"I am. And I wouldn't have lost them if I hadn't acted the fool at Brundisium. It was Fulvia's fault. She couldn't bear to think of the men getting the donative they expected. I didn't want to take her, but she insisted on going. She

got on my nerves. Do you think I don't know how to manage men? Yet I acted like a wretched tyrant. I don't blame them for deserting."

"If you give up now, we're all done for," said Fulvia. "You can't. Do you hear? You can't."

But she had lost her power to dominate. "Shut your cat's face," said Antonius, sullenly.

"Fulvia's right," began Lucius again.

"O find something new to say. Why are you always backing her up? You seem more like her husband than I do. You're welcome to the job."

"Make him do the right thing," said Fulvia between her teeth.

"Shut your cat's face. I won't do it."

"By Dis, you will!" cried Lucius. His face writhed and quivered. The scar showed lividly. "You'll do as you're told."

"My master, eh?" Antonius surveyed his wife and brother. "Go to hell."

Lucius sprang at him and bore him down to the floor. Antonius was the stronger man, but he was taken by surprise and he was feeling very weak and sick. Lucius gripped his arm behind his back, and straddled him. Antonius saw a dagger glinting in the air.

"What are you doing?" he asked incredulously.

"Are you going to fight, you rotten coward?" shouted Lucius, his eyes gleaming with a mad rage. "Or are you going to murder the lot of us?"

Suddenly Antonius remembered his soldiers, a host compacted by their loyalty to Cæsar. If he stood aside, that loyalty would fade; it would be broken away, thrown out by trivial needs and lures, worn out in political games of hide-and-seek. The soldiers had only a certain staying-power; they would forget in time, torn by the necessity to follow someone who could pay them and look after their families. But at the moment stronger than all such lures was the passion of loyalty. It must be given expression; it must not be let run to waste.

"Keep your dagger to stir your porridge," he said. "I'm going to fight. Let me up."

XII

REVOLUTION

SO Antonius rode northwards at the head of his remaining legions, reinforced by the veterans from Rome, to attack Decimus Brutus, who had now recruited four more legions; and the conservatives made overtures to Octavianus, who had taken refuge at Alba. Antonius was hugely outnumbered, but little he cared for that now. He had a name to shield him—the name of the Avenger.

At Rome the upper classes could not believe at first that the rowdy soldiers had gone; the unarmed mob they did not fear. Then gradually they realised that they were once more masters of Rome and that with any management at all they should soon be the undisputed lords of the world. Cassius would raise the East; Cornificius was holding Africa; Pollio held Spain; Plancus held Further Gaul; Decimus Brutus held Cisalpine Gaul. Certainly there was Lepidus in the lower province of Gaul, but he had so many affiliations with the conservatives; he would not oppose them. Likewise Octavianus, now guarding Rome with his two legions, could be controlled and kept in his place.

Against all these forces stood Antonius with his two legions, a prætorian cohort, and a crowd of undistributed veterans. And the name of Avenger.

Cicero felt his spirits rising, but did not like to trust Octavianus too far as yet. The test would be the day of Casca's assumption of the tribuneship, 10th December; if Octavianus allowed one of Cæsar's murderers to enter office, he would have proved his acceptance of the Amnesty.

Octavianus was far too worried holding the faith of his men and yet satisfying the Senate to think about Casca. The last thing he wished was to complicate matters further. Finally, on the morning of the 19th, Cicero overcame his

fears and doubts. He appeared in the Senate and dared to throw down the challenge. He said what the lesser men wanted but feared to say. Decimus Brutus was a great patriot for defying Antonius; he must be supported at all costs; Octavianus also deserved well of the State, and his two legions should be rewarded.

But the Senate was dilatory. Though it agreed, though it knew that conflict could not now be avoided, it did not dare to face the issues frankly.

ANTONIUS halted at Bononia on the Æmilian Road and sent a message to Decimus Brutus demanding the surrender of the province. He was in no hurry, and gave Decimus all the time necessary for settling into Mutina and preparing against a siege. With the sweep of action had come confidence to Antonius. He knew that he was at the head of events, that all the other leaders were but retarding the forces which nothing could hold back. Therefore time must be on his side. Time could but strengthen his mission and disintegrate the plans of the others. Tireless, he moved about among his soldiers, drawing from them the strength that he needed, the strength that would flood the world. He was unconcerned at the odds against him; for he alone possessed power, and he knew it. His power was the purpose animating his small force. The others would be painfully struggling to keep their men contented, promising them all kinds of rewards and preferments, elaborately arguing to convince them that they were standing for the rule of law and order.

Antonius needed no arguments. He was the Avenger.

WITH January the new consuls took up the control at Rome—Hirtius and Pansa, both moderate men who wanted peace without too great a landslide of power into the conservative camp; but the real leader of the State was Cicero. Against the flabbiness and indecision of the conservative majority, the astuteness of the few Antonians in the Senate who endeavoured to distract on side-issues, the sincere effort of the consuls to hold a middle course and keep open a door for negotiation, he alone fought with passionate directness for vigour of plan and act. Nothing else could save the State. He saw to the full the fanatical purpose of which Antonius

and his men were the core. Nothing could oppose that fanaticism but a determination of equal intensity.

The troubled Senate listened with pounding hearts and knew that he was right. But they could not drop the faint hope that negotiation might yet arrange things. Antonius had been so conciliatory in the months after Cæsar's death. There must be a mistake somewhere. They voted for an embassy.

But something had to be done. With some hastily levied troops Hirtius joined Octavianus and marched north.

Antonius was now between two armies, both greater than his own. He replied firmly and contemptuously to the ambassadors, and maintained his position. Soon the months of winter would be passed. Then the dead earth would be reborn. Then he would act. Meanwhile he sent his lieutenant Ventidius to collect more of the veterans in the south; and the talkers at Rome thought this a great joke, since Ventidius had been a mere mule-contractor once. What officers!

PANSA had remained to raise more money and four legions. Only one thing was acutely distressing the moneyed classes: the threat that the tributum, dropped for over a century, would now be reimposed. They were determined to resist that whatever arguments were brought forward, whatever talk of perils environing the State was dinned into their ears. Hands off money. In their fierce resistance they felt their own constitutional authorities more a menace than the distant Antonius, the chance of bloody revolution less fearful than the immediate call for taxes.

Cicero was bearing the whole dead weight of inertia on his shoulders. But he refused to be wearied or distracted. Mercilessly he reiterated his points. The State and the whole present order were doomed unless prompt and definite action was taken. Antonius must be denounced as a traitor, his men given a short time to disperse, money and more soldiers levied. It was ridiculous to debate terms. War had begun, and yet the Senate talked about reaching an accommodation.

A second embassy was decided on. The Senate even tried to make Cicero one of the ambassadors.

One thing only disturbed Cicero. In the necessity of creating a unified front and narrowing the issues down to Antonius against the State, he had been obliged to stand security for Octavianus, to swear before the Senate that Octavianus could be entirely trusted; and though Octavianus had responded by calling Cicero father, Cicero was not satisfied.

In mid-February came news from Greece. Brutus, who had gone in despair to Athens, had been caught in a revolt of the students; surprisingly the conservatives had carried all before them; Gaius Antonius had been desposed from Macedonia.

Then, early in March, came news that removed all effect of mere political moves in these armaments. Dolabella had stormed Smyrna and put Trebonius to death. War was begun.

Cassius had taken the province of Syria.

ANTONIUS, awaiting news of Dolabella, had led out his men for a stricter blockade of Mutina. When he heard of the death of Trebonius he swore heartily. Death to all the traitors. The net was tightening. What did he care for the odds?

Pansa could not keep on delaying at Rome, though on the principle of balance he for the moment blocked the Senate from appointing Cassius to charge of the East. Meanwhile Octavianus had persuaded Hirtius to leave their quarters, to seize Bononia (now evacuated by Antonius), and to advance within sight of besieged Mutina and its besiegers.

But the Senate was still afraid of action. Neither Octavianus nor Hirtius trusted their men. Hearing of the second embassy proposed, they wrote to Antonius, and he replied in a letter of indignant and burning appeal. Justice must be done, and Dolabella was the only man who had dared to strike for righteousness. But the day of wrath was coming.

Octavianus and Hirtius politely sent the violent letter on to Rome.

The armourers at Rome were working night and day.

Never had such an array of arms been known. It seemed that every able-bodied man in the Empire was soldiering.

So much the better, smiled Antonius at the heart of the ring, hopelessly hemmed in.

News came that Pansa was nearing, and Antonius resolved to act. The moment had come. He left some troops under Lucius to hold Octavianus and Hirtius in skirmish while he himself ambushed Pansa on the road. He did not know, however, that Hirtius had cautiously sent the Martian legion and two picked cohorts to reinforce and direct Pansa; but otherwise his strategy worked as he had intended. He concealed two legions and two picked cohorts at Forum Galli, and sent the rest of his cavalry and light infantry along the Æmilian Road. These men duly encountered Pansa's advance guard, but found veterans instead of raw recruits. They retreated, as instructed, and drew Pansa's troops on to Forum Galli, where the waiting legions swooped out to the attack.

Pansa bade two of his four new legions throw up a ram-parted camp as best they could, while he sent on the other two legions to support the attacked vanguard. At the same time he sent messengers to Hirtius. Then he strode into the forefront of the battle. His prætorian cohort was wiped out, himself gravely wounded, and the Martian legion, hotly pursued, had to retire in disorder to the encampment.

But at this point Hirtius appeared in response to the messages, and the troops of Antonius had no recourse but to disperse over the marshy and wooded ground. During the night Antonius rounded them up by cavalry and led them back to the lines before Mutina.

OCTAVIANUS and Hirtius were delighted to find that under the pressure of fear and promises their men would fight. They decided to break the lines of Antonius.

Antonius sent out his cavalry to drive them back and followed up with his legions. Hirtius led the 4th legion in an assault on the camp, and Decimus Brutus sallied out of Mutina. A fierce battle was fought. Antonius was attacked in front and rear by two superior armies. But the spirit of

invincibility was in his men and in himself, a Herculean figure of courage and strength. Hirtius and his chief officer were slain, and only the approach of Octavianus with his supports prevented Antonius from routing all the attackers. Decimus Brutus was hurled back into Mutina. The lines were unbroken.

That night Antonius held a Council of War. He did not know that Hirtius was dead or he would at once have assailed the inexperienced Octavianus. Messengers had arrived, however, with news that Ventidius with further legions of veterans had reached Faventia.

He decided to march off and join Lepidus in lower Gaul. Messengers were despatched to bid Ventidius cross the Apennines and march across Liguria for the same meeting-place.

Before dawn Antonius had marched out his own men. He knew that time was on his side and that his manœuvres would soon break down the numerical superiority of his opponents. The legions would see the standard of Cæsar shining brighter with every day that passed.

At Rome there were endless exclamations of joy. It was taken for granted that Antonius was crushed and that the revolution was ended. The Senators in their relief scoffed at Cicero for taking things so tragically. How right they had been to resist the tributum. Thus the victory which should have strengthened Cicero's authority deprived him of what grip he had had on the Senators through their fears. But he had his way in one thing. At last Antonius was proscribed.

But the victory was not so definite. Decimus had interviewed Octavianus, who, aware of the insecure hold he had on the troops, refused to pursue Antonius. Decimus wasted another day by going off to see the wounded Pansa; but on the way he received news that Pansa had died. Thus, by the time he set out with his own troops on the chase, Antonius had a start of two days.

On the second day of his march Antonius reached Parma, some thirty miles beyond Mutina. That evening he sent his troops to storm and sack the city. Let them hearten

themselves with the wetness of wine and women. Two days later he was forty miles farther on, at Placentia. Next day he was along the Milvian Road towards Dertona. At Dertona he gave his men a day's rest and then led them out on the mountain road.

Decimus, now allotted three of Pansa's legions besides his own, had to go much slower in pursuit. His raw recruits, exhausted by the privations of the siege, lacked the morale of the legionaries of Antonius. But he hung grimly on, subduing the men by his dogged earnestness.

Antonius marched his legions over the wild and rugged mountain tracks, cheering them with his indomitable presence as they trudged through desolate regions of stone. He ate horseflesh and berries among them, laughing at the fare, drinking horse urine for a bet, snatching the pack from the shoulders of a bent man and tossing it in the air as if he was playing at ball. He moved up and down the line, walking twice as far as the plodding soldiers, picking out a recognised face and talking of the great days under Cæsar in Gaul. He sang in his powerful voice, and threw stones at an occasional bird of prey. His boots were cut to pieces on the stones, but he refused a new pair, and compared bruises with the foot-sore. He was unwashed. He had let his beard grow. Any wine he could lay hands on he drank, laughing, fiercely and tautly alive.

But he had one anxiety. Would Ventidius meet him as ordered?

On 5th May Decimus reached Tortona and heard a rumour that Antonius and Ventidius had joined forces at Vado. He believed and wrote in despair to Cicero, asking for money. But during the night he learned that the junction had not been effected. Next day he advanced, and after a hard march, on the 9th, while only thirty miles from Vado, he discovered that he was too late. Ventidius had arrived.

But he did not know the new troubles of Antonius. The soldiers under Ventidius, not inspired by the long contact with Antonius that upheld the others, complained that they'd done nothing but march over mountains and that they'd had enough of it. Another 100 miles of heavy climbing was too much to ask.

Having no time to deal with this discontent, Antonius ordered Ventidius to occupy and hold Placentia; but Decimus heard of this move, and by a forced march he seized Placentia ahead of Ventidius. He thus helped Antonius considerably; for the discontented troops, seeing themselves shut out, decided to follow Antonius after all, and retraced their steps.

Antonius was now assured of a safe arrival beyond the Ligurian Mountains. The one hope of the conservatives was that Lepidus would declare against him; but Antonius had no fear of that.

Decimus, unable to pursue farther, marched off to join Plancus, who as governor of Further Gaul has massed his troops to the north of Lepidus.

ANTONIUS knew where the heart of Lepidus lay. While before Mutina he had received a deputation from Lepidus, who had given the men conveniently vague instructions; they attached themselves to Antonius under the command of Silanus, younger son of Servilia and half-brother of Brutus. Before Lepidus left Rome he had been made Chief Priest through the offices of Antonius, and a match had been arranged between his young son and an even younger daughter of Antonius, who was living with her grandmother. But Lepidus liked to do things his own way and Antonius had no wish to hurry him. Always now he had the conviction that time was on his side, that every day gained meant a deepening and widening of disorder in the ranks of the enemy and of Cæsar-faith in the hearts of the soldiers.

He had lost all fear and doubt. He was part of the army that he led, the spear-head of the shaft. The great boisterous communal life of the men was centred in his blood. They were his thoughts, his strength; stirring with him asleep or awake; filled with him as he with them. The day was the glamour of their bonded energy; the night was the immensity of their trust. His decision was their increasing certainty of worship for the dead Cæsar. He ate and drank with them, supremely absorbed and happy.

He had no life of his own. He had forgotten that any such life had ever been.

Meanwhile he played the game that Lepidus wanted; and this too suited his mood, his absorption in the routine of the army as something satisfying in itself. Without thought he was dramatising himself as the legionary aroused to a half-drunken devotion and comprehension of the world's dark purposes, appealing, fighting for a faith, fighting to be understood and given a sense of worth.

Lepidus had entrenched strongly at Forum Voconii, and Antonius led up his army and camped on the other side of a little stream, the Argenteus.

Silanus and another officer (who in charge of the outposts had surrendered to Antonius) appeared before Lepidus, and were mildly reprimanded. As Lepidus wrote in his report, "out of pity" he did not punish them further. He allowed a bridge of boats to be built between the two camps, and welcomed agents from Antonius, who pretended to be deserters. With a quiet chuckle he wrote to Rome that the army of Antonius was "visibly melting away" and that the legions would not fail in their duty.

His one officer seriously loyal to the Senate, Laterensis, reported that messengers were coming and going; that the soldiers were being incited by their officers; that the soldiers were talking together in groups. Lepidus thanked him for his zeal.

Then Antonius, dishevelled and with unkempt beard, appeared on the bank of the Argenteus at the narrowest part, and harangued the opposite camp. Lepidus imperturbably waited a while and then ordered the trumpets to sound and drown the voice of Antonius.

Laterensis reported that fraternising was going on and that he doubted the fidelity of the troops unless something was done. Lepidus thanked him again and said that he would mention him in despatches.

At last, on the morning of the 29th, Antonius with a few soldiers forded the stream. The men in the camp at once tore down the palisades, cheered the oncomers, took Antonius up on their shoulders, and carried him to the tent of Lepidus. Lepidus was still in bed, but without waiting to dress he came out and embraced Antonius amid the plaudits of both armies.

A few yards away Laterensis caused a diversion by stabbing himself in the heart.

Next day Lepidus wrote to the Senate:

"My army, mutineers to a man, kept to its tradition of preserving the lives of fellow-citizens and the general peace, and, to tell you the truth, compelled me to come out in support of such a great host of Roman citizens in their claim to life and civil rights. I therefore pray you, conscript fathers, to drop all feuds, to consider the well-being of the State, and not to charge me with a crime because of the mercy shown by myself and my army at a crisis of civil discord."

THE news shattered the hopes of the Senate. Pollio and Plancus could not now be relied on; but still the senators continued vaguely to hope, to dodge all outright issues, to abominate any mention of the tributum. Servilia by her pleas even warded off for a while the denunciation of Lepidus, her son-in-law, though he was an ally of the proscribed Antonius. She had had enough worries lately to keep her occupied. Porcia had to be watched; she had become melancholic, and once beat her head against the wall; at another time she had set the bed on fire.

The news awoke Octavianus out of his nervous inaction. What was he to do? He would have to make some final choice or he would be lost. After some agonised hours he decided to make one more effort to use the conservatives, to join with Cicero, whose dreams of the perfectly harmonised State appealed to him strongly. He knew that as things stood his legions were untrustworthy, and he had only held them by continually increasing his promises. Only by attaining some high and definite rank would he be able to satisfy them now and to preserve his life. If he could do that, he might yet go on steering a middle course and contribute towards a balanced reconstruction of the State.

He wrote to Cicero suggesting that he and Cicero should be elected consuls together; people would of course object that he was ludicrously young, but would not his youth be offset if he had Cicero as his colleague? Of course he was legally ineligible, but Cicero could surely obtain a dispensation. He would follow Cicero's advice in everything.

Cicero was tempted. He saw the difficulties besetting Rome and knew that Octavianus could not maintain his position without some such stroke—moreover, that if Octavianus obtained this concession, he would probably throw the full weight of his name into supporting the Senate. But he dreaded the accusation of personal ambition, and his tentative efforts to broach the scheme were coldly met. The Senate even objected to the huge donatives that Octavianus was promising, and wanted both to cut them and to limit them to the first two revolting legions.

Antonius was busy reorganising his legions, filling them with the compact energy and purpose of the men he had led from Mutina.

OCTAVIANUS sent a soldier-deputation to Rome to demand the consulship for himself and a repeal of the proscription of Antonius. He saw now that his only hope was to go with the tide of the devoted soldiery; otherwise he would lose his legions, despite all his promises.

The deputation, acting roughly, was dismissed sharply by the Senate, who now considered Cicero discredited and were determined not to pay the tributum to see a pack of soldiers enriched.

Octavianus spent a night of despair, talking with Agrippa. In the morning he announced that he would march on Rome.

The Senate in panic sent an embassy with agreement to pay the donatives. Then they succumbed even further. They would fulfil all the promises of Octavianus and would allow him to be elected consul without a personal canvass at Rome. But then came news that the African legion had arrived at Ostia, and this legion, with the soldiers recalled from Sardinia, was ordered to defend Rome. The offers already made to the legions of Octavianus were withdrawn.

Those legions were now at a fever-heat of rage, roused to complete exasperation by this exhibition of double dealing. Eagerly at the orders of Octavianus they continued with the march on Rome. No sooner had they appeared before the walls than the defending troops declared for the Son of Cæsar and opened the gates.

Octavianus was master of Rome.

ON 19th August he was elected consul with his cousin Pedius. Pedius at once called a Comitia and passed a law repealing the Amnesty. A special court was appointed to try the murderers of Cæsar and to condemn them if they failed to appear. The chief Cæsarians shared out the privilege of taking over the accusations, for they wanted the fame of the act and the profit of gaining a portion of the condemned man's estate.

All the murderers were at once convicted for contumacy.

News came that Cassius had besieged Dolabella in Laodicea, and Dolabella had committed suicide to escape capture.

OCTAVIANUS now left Rome and marched north again. As he marched, Pedius had the proscriptions of Antonius and Lepidus removed. Pollio and Plancus had gone over to the Cæsarian side; and after what Octavianus had done, it was impossible for the quarrel between him and Antonius to continue. Also, Antonius had lost his animosity. He was entirely the mouthpiece of the soldiers' vengeance and devotion, and he left Lepidus to arrange a conference. On a small island in a river near Bononia the conference was held.

Antonius and Lepidus appeared on one bank, Octavianus on the other. A tent had been pitched on the island. The leaders advanced alone across the bridges, meeting on the island and passing hands over one another's clothing to make sure that no daggers were concealed. Then they entered the tent.

The three men constituted themselves as a Committee for Establishing Public Safety.

The main politicians of the opposing party must be eliminated. More important, money must be raised. For that purpose it was necessary to proscribe and destroy a whole class, the class of the big landlords and financiers.

As they talked, Octavianus shuddered with horror. He saw what was coming; he saw Italy deluged with blood and misery. Was there no meaning but personal needs and political conflict in such a horrible culmination? Surely it must somehow be an act of justice, of retribution. Surely

out of their agony and murder a new State would arise. Otherwise it was too cruel.

He looked at Antonius and Lepidus. They also felt the strain of the decisions. Their eyes were bloodshot; their faces looked flushed and puffy in the dim underlight of the tent; their hands shook. He wondered if they were thinking as he thought, or did they merely feel repulsion from an act of calculated bloodshed? Then he saw in Antonius something more than that weakness of repulsion. There was something great, something that Octavianus felt to be infinitely greater than himself. What was it?

He looked closer, dropping his lids. Then he saw it. It wasn't merely the man Antonius. It was the enormous loyalty of the soldiers that he led, the spirit of Cæsar. That was what the world needed, a spirit of faith and trust. A voice of power and love. And here the three leaders of that movement were calmly decreeing the spoliation and murder of a whole class.

Let them die. It wasn't merely that so much of their wealth was misbegotten; that the men had come to represent a system of speculation and oppression; for there was another side to their activities, the tradition of Roman service that Octavianus loved. Octavianus felt stirring a twilight sense of a new world, a world which would be the real fulfilment of that tradition, a world of constructive law for which Cæsar had fought and died. Cæsar indeed was not dead. He must not die. The cry of the people for justice and peace must be heard, even though it brought suffering and death and injustice into being before its hope became true.

The landlord class had struck Cæsar down. Now they were going to be wiped out.

So be it.

"Well then," said Antonius in a steady, nonchalant voice, but grasping his wine-cup so tightly his knuckles showed white, "I give up that uncle of mine. Octavianus gives up Cicero. Lepidus gives up his brother."

He took a deep drink and held out the beaker to refill the cups.

"Not for me," said Octavianus in a thin voice. "That's as much as my stomach will hold."

Antoni^{us} laughed, not unkindly. "You'll get a stronger stomach yet, my young friend. You'll have to, in this world of ours."

THE proletarians and the soldiers were afflicted with no doubts and questionings. They had known all along what they wanted, and at last they'd got it. The Divine Cæsar had heard. The day of retribution was come. The murderers were condemned, interdicted from fire and water. A Providence ruled the world. The rich and the powerful were overthrown; their estates and money were seized; the golden times of communal plenty were returned. Blood was streaming to replenish the earth, blood that was the redemption of sin and an offering to fatten the ghost of the Saviour. The oppressors and the landlords were proscribed, criminals who could be killed on sight. The usurers were sucked dry for a change. The tables of the moneylenders were overturned in the temples.

The people scanned joyously the lists of proscription. The scribes of the Treasury were ransacking records to find the names of men with large estates or incomes. Informers thronged about the offices. Money must be torn from the individual hoarder and flung into the coffers of the State, whence it would flow to subsidise the impoverished and the homeless. Huge crowds came daily to worship the altar in the Forum. Cæsar had become the God of the Roman Empire.

Cæsar be praised.

Now had come the day of retribution. Haughty senators, who had ruled as kings in the provinces of their appointment, scrambled into the coarse sackcloth or goats-hair shirts of slaves, dressed as muleteers or footmen, crawled into spidery roof-holes, desperately hid themselves among the rats under floor-boards, or crouched in the stinking slave-latrines. They lay in deserted tombs, peeping out at thieves and stray lovers; they paddled in the sewers and listened to ominous scuttling sounds in the damp chill of filth. Some lay down and moaned on the floor, awaiting their slayers and refusing to stand up to be killed; and a few came out with dignified faces and unresisting hands to meet their slayers on the way.

Their one hope was to reach the coast where they might bribe a trading-skipper or a fishing-crew. Sextus Pompeius, still at large—the half-pirate son of the great Pompeius—sent out boats to cruise up and down the coast and save survivors, and issued proclamations that promised those who sheltered a proscribed man double the informer's reward. But only a handful reached the coast. Soldiers were scouring the roads, on the look-out for the disguised runaways; and when they caught one of them, they came proudly to Rome with his head on a pike to claim the reward and brag in the taverns. The people cheered the processions with the blood-matted heads, trying to guess whose hated face it was. The man who saw a late master or recognised someone whose client he had been became a hero, and everyone bought him drinks of congratulation, while he ranted and abused the dead.

Some senators, true to the tradition of their blood, collected those of their friends and clients who remained faithful, barricaded the house, and fought to the death. They fought, and the crowd swept over them, trampling their faces into the mosaic floors where dainty bridals were depicted. A Samnite of eighty years, proscribed for his wealth, bade his slaves throw all the gold and valuables into the street, to cheat his executioners; then he set fire to his house, and consumed himself and all his furniture and objects of art.

Now was come the day of retribution. Slaves who had been maltreated crept up behind their proscribed masters and stabbed them in the reins, and mutilated their dead bodies and bit at the flesh once so privileged. Wives gave information to the authorities and seduced the agents to make sure that the names of their husbands were written in the list of those to die. Some hid their husbands, and then jeeringly pointed out the place to the seekers. Sons took revenge for shortened pocket-money by betraying their fathers.

But all were not so base. Many wives and slaves dared death to hide and smuggle out their lords. One slave dressed himself as his master and let the pursuers slay him to preserve the error. One wife kept her husband for weeks in the rafters

over her bed, feeding him secretly lest the slaves should notice and betray. Others sought to find the Triumvirs and beseech them for mercy, offering concealed jewels or their bodies for ransom.

Still in the streets threaded the processions with heads on pikes; and the altar of Cæsar, glistening with stolen unguents, was kissed by raptured crowds.

The loot was beyond counting. The spoils of the proud families that had gutted the world were now at the mercy of the proletarians and the common soldiers. In Rome vast collections were dumped, and every Italian town had its piles of confiscated goods. The scribes were weary with checking the accounts of estates and articles, the lists of valuable slaves, to be sold. Statues, rich pottery, vases, rare and beautiful fabrics, pictures, Eastern carpets, jewelry, cut crystals, gems, were cluttered in heaps. Tools, oxen, horses, waggons, mules from the farms were for sale in endless quantities. The desks of the proscribed were rifled for credit-notes to swell the Treasury.

Auctions were begun at Rome and the other towns to dispose of this plunder. The Triumvirs, the agents, the officers, took their pick. Fulvia grabbed greedily. The soldiers bought cheaply luxurious objects for which they had no use. The goods were sold at incredibly low prices. But more and more flowed in. The Jews and the freedmen with a little capital were buying as fast as they could. The government was commandeering the large estates for distribution among the poorer citizens and the veterans.

Only one man of the rich bankers at Rome was able to weather out the storm—Atticus, who had shrewdly aided Fulvia with loans in the dark days of the retreat from Mutina, when others of his class were squeezing her for payment in full of all the properties she had been buying. Now Antonius refused to let him be touched.

The landlord class had killed Cæsar to preserve their advantages and what they felt to be their dues. Now they had the retort.

CICERO was not caught at Rome. He was staying at his brother's Tusculan villa. They fled and reached Astura,

where Cicero had a small summer-house on an islet off Antium. They meant to sail thence to Macedonia. Quintus Cicero and his son, the lad who had been thrown out of the house of Antonius, turned back for some money and were slain, fighting bravely. Cicero escaped in a boat, but, falling into extreme sickness, insisted on being set ashore at Formiæ, where he had another villa. He rested awhile; but news came of approaching soldiers. His servants warned him; but darkness had hemmed his mind in.

"Leave me to die," he protested brokenly, striving to preserve to the last his illusions, "in the fatherland that I have so often saved."

The slaves bore him into the litter and hurried off seawards. Cicero groaned in the litter's curtained dusk. Every sanction of civilisation was trodden underfoot. Why should he live? His work was all to no end. Where was the harmonised State in which each man found and carried out his proper work, and at the top stood the man whose service was dedicated power? His life unrolled before him, its triumphs political and social and literary: a full life, and yet he had achieved nothing. This was the end of it all. He thought of the loving slaves who were endeavouring to save him. There was worth in the world of men, but it was ruined by the encroaching spot of blackness—that pulse of fear that worked in everyone, a shrouded memory of intolerable pain. Was that the hell of which the Mysteries spoke? That darkness closing in upon the individual mind, closing in over the world, the wings of a sinister bird of prey, the mad spot that no one could locate. Hell was real, the unknown madness in everyone. He had seen it in the riotous Clodius; and now he was forced to face it in himself, his failure, that unreasonable cry of pain, that bitter dissatisfaction and loss.

O close the curtain for ever. Pull down the darkness. Pull down the roof of the world and give me peace in the universal death.

Cries of pain from the past. He had seen so much cruelty; he had himself caused so much, though he had always striven for the right. There was justice in suffering. No one suffered unjustly.

He prayed for deliverance; his life had been righteous. He

had no fear of the twisted end. Suddenly the vision of Tullia rose before him. She was cere-wrapped in opaque white, and yet she was naked. She had the wise eyes of his mother, and yet she was his daughter, dying in childbirth, dying for the child of the waster Dolabella who had fallen on his own sword in Laodicea. "Die for me!" That was the cry of the whole world. Tullia would save him.

He reached out his shaky hands, an old broken man, his face haggard and discoloured.

The eyes of visionary Tullia grew, burned yellow with a feline ecstasy, terrible eyes of pain.

The slaves were shouting and trying to run with the litter, stumbling.

THE soldiers had come to the house, led by a centurion and Popilius Lænas, whom Cicero had once defended in the courts and saved from a capital charge. Popilius, a lean, bulgy-eyed man who prided himself on his efficiency, quickly questioned the slaves. They denied that they knew anything, weeping. The soldiers hustled up a lad whom Cicero had been having taught to read. The young slave brushed back his hair and faced the interrogator. He licked his lips. Cicero had been very kind to him—kind as a man was to a slave. Might he be cursed!

"He's in a litter. Down that road. Off to the coast."

Popilius flung the youth aside and set off with the soldiers down the road at a jog-trot. They caught up the litter as it was turning a clump of beech-trees.

Cicero heard the grating voices and climbed laboriously out of the litter. His own party outnumbered the soldiers, and were armed.

"Do not fight," he said, sternly.

Then he sat on the litter-edge, stroking his stubbled chin as he was wont to do when thinking out a problem. He was covered with dust, seamed with age, weak; but he felt as if he was about to walk out on the Rostra and deliver the greatest speech of his life.

He rose and stood with his head thrown back, staring at Popilius. He remembered the man's face. Where had he seen it before?

Popilius approached, and, shortening his sword, stabbed him in the throat. Cicero gave a clucking sob and fell backwards. The slaves wailed and threw themselves on the ground. Popilius lost his nerve and stood over the body, hacking at the head. He must sever it. And the hands too. Fulvia had offered a reward for the hands. The head and hands were to be spiked on the Rostra from which Cicero had spoken in abuse of her husbands, and she had sworn to pierce the villainous tongue with her needle. He had defamed three husbands of hers, and she would pierce his tongue.

Popilius hacked the head off at last, sweating as if he'd run for miles. Harshly he bade a soldier remove the hands.

Then he tossed the head to another of the soldiers, who tore down the litter-curtain for a wrap. Popilius breathed loudly and wiped his hands on some grass. It wasn't the reward he wanted. He wanted his name to go down in history. Now he'd claim the right to set up his bust with a wreath on the head, next to Cicero's full-length statue. He wouldn't deny that Cicero was the greater man; a bust would suffice, but a bust he must have.

WHEN Popilius arrived in Rome he found Antonius presiding over an electoral meeting. Antonius looked at the dead face of his enemy, and said, "Now let there be an end of proscribing."

But a few words couldn't stop the slaying.

Later, hearing the whole story, he ordered that the slave who had betrayed Cicero should be handed over to Pomponia, the widow of Cicero's brother; and Pomponia, being a bad-tempered woman who had loathed her husband and brother-in-law, saw that the slave died painfully, grilling slices of his own flesh and eating them.

GALLUS flung himself down on the bed. Amos had called at the flat which Gallus had now taken, and informed him that Karni had borne a baby-girl. "Exactly like her," said Amos, "except that everyone says the eyes and nose and chin are like mine. Never has there been such a successful birth. All the women that came to lend her their amulets said so. I myself bought her at great cost a stone from the Jordan

to press into the pit of her stomach. That eased her pain considerably. Never was there a better wife and mother. For the last month she ate nothing but eggs, so that her child's eyes might be large. And the business is prospering. Father's bought a small farm for breeding thrushes."

His pleasure ended by annoying Gallus, who felt ashamed at being angered by another's harmless satisfactions. But he got rid of him, and set out to see Cytheris; and passing through the Forum he had been jostled by a noisy band of soldiers who carried a man's head on a broomstick.

"The world's a loathsome place," he said to Cytheris.

She looked at him and then went on curling a ringlet round her finger before the mirror. Her plan hadn't worked out as well as she had thought. Though she had argued it all out again and again, and every time convinced herself more thoroughly that she had a complete right to act as a free woman, yet in practice she found that her conscience ached; and that made her unkind to Gallus: which was unfair. But the more unkind she was to him, the less could she stop doing it. And the more her conscience ached, the more she felt driven to find a momentary solace in someone else's arms.

Gallus watched her carefully. He knew that she was unfaithful, but couldn't face it. There had been too much misery at the outset of the affair. He fought down the knowledge in himself, and said that love without trust was mere wretchedness. She was wayward but not wicked; she loved him; she wasn't being unfaithful; it was only the queer whims that caught women up in their periods of the moon. Weren't there weeks when she was all that he could ask of life? Yet he knew all the same; and she knew that he knew; and both lied.

"I can't write anything," he said, with pceevish blame. "I haven't written anything passable for months."

Yet his affairs were going so well. He was liked by Octavianus and had been offered a staff position; his future was assured; he had a place in the world, was no longer the weakling whose life had been flattened by a hard word from Cytheris.

She caught his face reflected in the mirror as he stirred,

and she felt overlooked, discovered. The blood flushed in her cheeks, and she was about to speak angrily. Then she saw his face, how dear it was.

With a flood of pain she foresaw the future, clearly as her own face which now shone alone in the mirror—the face that stared back at her with suddenly strange eyes. Within a few days he would accuse her, and she would deny his accusations, and he would persist, and then she would confess, in misery and resentment; and they would part and hate one another; and they would be unendurably lonely, and they would come together again and taste the old sweetness between the teeth of their kisses; and he would write vital poems again, and she would be joyful and happy. And then it would all start over again.

It wasn't the fault of either. And it was worth while. Life was endlessly worth while. Even when her face was lined and her back was bent, she'd say that.

Her eyes were filled with the soft violet tenderness that he adored as she turned to him. For tonight they would be entirely happy.

"Darling, darling," she said, dropping down beside him, "I love every little hair on the back of your hands and the way you tie the knots in your shoes so that no one can ever undo them again. It's you I love. Do you understand? You, exactly as you are."

OCTAVIANUS lay gasping on the couch. It was impossible to live after what he'd done. He was vile. This absolute power had corroded all its three possessors. Antonius was brutalised and coarser, preserving sanity only by drink. Lepidus was shrivelling before one's eyes, growing furtive, loud-voiced, bullying, and then losing all grip, handing everything over to his slaves and freedmen, sitting blankly in his chair and looking out on any intruder with a dull pomposity of fear.

Octavianus saw himself—as divided as Lepidus, irritable, bursting out into flares of violence, hungering one minute for more names of doomed men, wanting to kill them all and finish the business, then the next moment weeping with Octavia and sending out unavailing messages of mercy.

But now he couldn't bear it any longer. The woman had come miserably. She had looked so utterly sad and weak. In her disordered distress she had slipped the stola from her shoulder and shown her young, bony flesh. A wretched tear-stained woman. He had ravished her. It was her fault for being so helpless. He loathed her for it. If she had resisted, he would have come to his senses. Her pushes had been so feeble, like weak invitations, and her eyes had stared glassily. She had been so thin, so bonily loose. A man couldn't remember such things and remain sane. He had wanted to tell the soldiers to carry her out and strangle her, but he had lacked the courage.

And in three days he was to marry young Clodia, the step-daughter of Antonius, to please the soldiers, who wanted to see a family alliance between their leaders.

He sat looking at his hands as they trembled in his lap. Why should life make him do such things? It was the stench of blood. It invaded his sleep; it dripped from the curtains of the night. The night was filled with faces, blood in their eyes. He was only able to keep alive because Agrippa slept in the same room, within reach, and soothed him when he woke choking.

What was to be done?

Soon he and Antonius must set out to destroy the armies of Cassius and Brutus in the East; but that didn't disturb him much, frightened as he still was of war. In the last skirmish before Mutina he had been carried into the front rank, fighting furiously in his terror; and the men had cheered him for his courage, little knowing his heart. Agrippa had saved him, covering his retreat. But Antonius would see to the next war. Octavianus had no doubt whatever of the result. Antonius would crush Brutus and Cassius as easily as his drunken elbow knocked a tankard off the table. He was invincible; for he was the spirit of the soldiers incarnate; he seemed to have lost his individuality, to be submerged beneath and raised above it into brutalities and powers that Octavianus could not fathom and that he dreaded. Yes, Antonius was bearing up best against the awful burden of these days of blood. Even when drunk he showed a kind of battered nobility. He was the prow of the ship, leaping

through the waves of the storm, carrying forward the thrill and strain of the ship's timbers.

But what would be the end? Octavianus asked the question of his heart. What was his own place in this struggle? Was he an ambitious imposter, a mere appendage to the name of Cæsar?

Then he calmed. Cæsar had chosen him. He, Octavianus, was no coward; when he had once decided, nothing could shift him. Enlightenment broke on him, gripping his body as a lover's hand encircling a girl's wrist. His pulse beat wildly; he felt himself merging impalpably in light. He thought for a moment it was death; but he did not die. Loyalty was the need, the urge that he had recognised in Antonius. The world wanted a shrine, a shrine filled with a human figure that it could know and revere and acknowledge. Antonius was the incarnate spirit of the revolt; but once the crisis passed, he would be as empty of purpose as the victorious legions. No, the future was with Octavianus. He had it in him to give the world what it needed, to draw the baby of life out of the grievous, lengthening birth-pangs of these years. The fanaticism of Cæsar-worship must be returned to the sanctities of home; and out of those sanctities must come the service that would transform the Empire. There must be continuity, faith, justice: a man giving his best and sustaining the world. Peace. The world needed peace, and food.

Not in vain had the men murdered Cæsar. Rightly had he died. He had had too much to give, and his pity had become arrogance. Octavianus pitied the world and felt that he could have patience. He would earn his inheritance. He was the Son of Cæsar.

He called, and an attendant entered. "Who was that woman?" He signed fiercely as the man began to speak. "No, I don't want her name. Write out a pass of freedom in my name for her husband, and send it to her."

He put his signature to the paper without looking at the husband's name. It would haunt him.

He lay back again, and the trembling-fit returned. He knew he would vomit. He called in a low voice to the slave. "Octavia."

She came quickly, and held his head with her cool hand. Dimly he was aware of her gentle presence, her swollen body showing the child that she was bearing to Marcellus. That sight made him feel a faint touch of jealousy and yet a great comfort; he would not have things otherwise. Then the nausea swept over him. Ah! he would retch out his very life. But he wouldn't die, he mustn't die.

"I'll be all right in a moment," he gasped.

She kissed him softly on the brow, over his burning eyes. There was love in the world. Peace, and a home and a woman's hands. Work and food and a sleep untroubled by strange gods. Octavianus drifted into a doze. He had no fear. He was the Son of Caesar.